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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 12 October 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. GANEV (President)	(Bulgaria)
later:	Mr. DAYARATNE (Vice-President)	(Sri Lanka)
later:	Mrs. ESCALER (Vice-President)	(Philippines)
later:	Mr. GHAFOORZAI (Vice-President)	(Afghanistan)

- Social development: (a) Questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family [93] (continued)

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Conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons

(i) Report of the Secretary-General
(ii) Draft resolution

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 93 (continued)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

CONCLUSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS:

(i) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/415)
(ii) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/47/L.4)

The PRESIDENT: This afternoon the General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting, is holding the second of the plenary meetings to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 93.

I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/47/L.4, "International Day of Disabled Persons". The text before the Assembly is the result of informal consultations that took place in an open-ended working group and reflects the broad consensus reached by Member States.

The preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution deal with the efforts of the international community taken during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons aimed at the improvement of the situation of persons with disabilities. The emphasis is placed on the need for broader and more energetic action at all levels - global, regional and national - to fulfil the objectives of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the Assembly 10 years ago.

In operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution the General Assembly proclaims 3 December as the International Day of Disabled Persons. On that date in 1982 the Assembly adopted resolution 37/53, in which it announced the beginning of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the conclusion of which we are observing in our meetings today and tomorrow. On the same date, 3 December 1982, the General Assembly, in resolution 37/52, adopted the World

(The President)

Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which became the cornerstone of international activities in this sphere. I should like to express the hope that the General Assembly will support the proclamation of the International Day of Disabled Persons and that international, regional and national organizations and agencies will extend their full cooperation in observing that Day.

Mr. SCOTT (United Kingdom): I am truly honoured to address you today on behalf of the European Community and its member States at this meeting of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, which marks the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action. We supported the setting aside of four plenary meetings to discuss the important subject of disability, and we are grateful to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for their opening statements this morning. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, in document A/47/415. There is no doubt that it contains helpful recommendations to move the disability programme from awareness-raising to action and to implement the many guidelines and policy documents developed over the Decade. The European Community and its member States welcome this opportunity to mark a turning-point in the international community's awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities.

Mr. de Cotret, Canadian Minister responsible for the status of persons with disabilities, has already outlined the outcome of the international meeting of ministers for persons with disabilities in Montreal last week, and we would like to thank Mr. de Cotret for acting as host to the meeting, which was the largest-ever gathering of ministers responsible for persons with disabilities.

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In April 1992 in Vancouver the Canadian Government hosted a conference on independent living entitled "Independence 92" to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons which over 3,000 persons with disabilities attended. The Secretary-General's message to the Conference outlined the principles of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons which, throughout the Decade, have guided both the work of the United Nations on behalf of disabled persons and that of its Member States. A good example of the United Nations commitment to these principles is the Disabled Persons Unit at the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna. We think also of the painstaking work of Mr. Leandro Despouy, the Special Rapporteur, who last year produced his Final Report on Human Rights and Disability, which was well received by persons with disabilities around the world because it so accurately reflected their own experiences and ideas.

In adopting the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in 1982 the General Assembly expressed its renewed commitment to promoting effective measures. These included the prevention of disability, rehabilitation and the realization of the goals of equality and full participation of persons with disabilities in economic and social life and development. Although much progress has been made, the essential objectives of the World Programme of Action have yet to be realized. There are still many persons with disabilities who do not enjoy basic human rights and equal opportunities. The primary goal of all nations is to establish a society for all by the year 2000, a society in which persons with disabilities are fully integrated. For this to be achieved it must be recognized that obstacles to independent living and full equality do not result so much from an

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individual's functional differences but from an environment that has not been designed to meet the needs of all citizens. In this respect we should like to underline the role played by organizations of persons with disabilities as representatives of their members.

The suggested priorities for the global strategy for disability in the year 2000 and beyond, are equal participation, access to opportunity and recognition of equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. In this respect we should note the work of the working group, established by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1990/26, on standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons and look forward to its report to be considered next year. We welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 46/119, which endorsed the principles on the protection of persons with mental illness and the improvement of mental health care.

We have witnessed in the last decade the development of many new voluntary organizations which have been set up, and are run, by persons with disabilities. Some Governments have enacted new legislation to uphold the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, while other countries have set up national committees of disabled people which advise Governments and statutory bodies of the special needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities. The European Com unity has also developed close links with representative European organizations of persons with disabilities so that they can express their views on the Community's actions in favour of persons with disabilities.

The European Community itself has run a number of disability action programmes, notably its programme for Handicapped People in the European Community Living Independently in an Open Society (HELIOS) and its precursor, which was directly inspired by the United Nations Decade. Aimed at the full

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integration of people with disabilities into an open society, the European Community and its member States set up networks of rehabilitation centres, centres for vocational training and economic integration as well as social integration projects and projects for the integration of children with disabilities into normal schools with participants in all 12 member States. Many useful lessons have been learned by those responsible for providing training and other services for persons with disabilities, and there have been several instances of ideas being transferred in their entirety. For example, a project in the United Kingdom created a sensory stimulation, entertainment and therapy centre for people with profound learning difficulties using ideas from a study visit to the Netherlands. In another instance, the methodology used by several projects for the social integration of persons with mental handicaps and mental illness using transitional, supervised homes and supportive staff has been progressively transferred to others in Greece and Italy. This programme is about to end but the European Commision has made a proposal to continue to work in this area through a second HELIOS programme. This will extend and amplify the activities undertaken under HELIOS I at the local, regional, national and European level, particularly by comparing experience and exchanging information concerning innovative integration measures.

The European Community and its member States have long been aware of the importance of providing specialist information to people with disabilities and has set about the ambitious task of constructing a multinational, multilingual database called "Handynet". This is a mammoth task, involving twelve countries and nine languages. At the end of last year the European Commission produced its first information technology package containing information on

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technical aids and equipment for people with all types of disability and this service, which is now operational, will substantially improve the amount of information available to persons with disabilities, and their carers and advisers, within the European Community.

The European Community and its member States support the employment and training of persons with disabilities and has initiated an exchange of experiences and information through the Horizon Initiative, which was launched last year. Horizon aims particularly for the introduction of good practices into the less well-developed areas of the European Community by inviting proposals for joint projects from more than one member State, and the overwhelming response to this idea has been seen to be very encouraging.

The Council of Europe's Ministerial Conference, held in Paris in November 1991, took as its theme "Independent Living for Disabled People". First, we looked at "access", which is necessary to enable people with mobility problems to get about and to attend places of work and entertainment and to exercise their rights as citizens - for example, by entering a polling station in order to vote at elections. Then there was the question of "support" - people with disabilities who are unable to work and who may require career or personal advice. They may also require assistance from local social services - for example, in obtaining necessary aids and equipment. And the third aspect we looked at was "information". Getting the right information at the right time is the heart of the matter. Indeed all persons with disabilities need the same information as their able-bodied neighbour plus the specialist information they require to enable a full and satisfying life. It is essential for professionals and other information providers to consider how best to deliver the information to persons with disabilities in a readily

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available form. There is also the problem of targeting information to those persons with disabilities who are isolated from their local community and to those who are not aware that they have needs or indeed do not necessarily consider themselves to be disabled.

At the end of the Paris Conference a Declaration was issued part of which was to announce a proposal to set up a pan-European network of projects on independent living and equality of opportunities for persons with disabilities. As a fundamental principle, projects would be run with the full and active participation of persons with disabilities. The aim of the network would be to exchange good practice on independent living across national frontiers.

An estimated 250 million people in developing countries experience some form of disability. One of the main barriers to living with disability continues to be social attitudes. Attitudes towards disability have in general encouraged dependency. Expertise and experience are some of the most valuable commodities in the world today, and those of us living in the more developed parts of the world should bear this in mind when considering best how to help those, particularly children with disabilities, in less developed countries.

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I am now thinking especially of another theme in the World Programme of Action - the prevention of disability. This was and is one of the main objectives of the Programme. Technical advances over the Decade mean that more can now be done to limit the extent of avoidable disability, whether the cause be malnutrition, disease, injury or hereditary condition. There is today an immense fund of experience and technical know-how, which can and should be used to help developing countries prevent avoidable disabilities.

Disability-related aid should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in development through a process that creates economic independence and self-help and in which they are themselves involved in the decisions and planning that most closely affect them. Outreach services for community and community-based rehabilitation provide cost-effective alternatives to institution-based rehabilitation. We need to be careful that we give the kind of help that will enable them to establish solutions to their problems. What really matters is how we help countries to set up mechanisms by which the new technology can be delivered.

The past Decade has taught us a number of lessons from which we need to learn when thinking about the future. What we need, above all, is a realistic policy that takes account of, and seeks to meet, the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities throughout the world. It is important that these policies be developed in consultation with persons with disabilities and with organizations working for them and that they include demands for justice and equal rights and opportunities to enable those people to achieve their potential and to enjoy life in the company of friends and colleagues, some of whom just happen to be able-bodied.

Mr. JUNG (Germany): The Federal Republic of Germany is a member State of the European Community; therefore we fully support the words of appreciation of the Decade of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action that have just been uttered by our British colleague on behalf of the European Community.

We too would like to thank the United Nations for the future-oriented activities in favour of disabled persons - activities that were initiated at the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly in 1982 by the World Programme of Action. Earlier - in 1976 - 1981 was proclaimed as the International Year of Disabled Persons.

These activities have opened up a new dimension of international policy for disabled persons and have triggered a world-wide chain reaction in favour of a segment of the population that continues to be disadvantaged. Millions of people are still living in the shadow of society, as Willy Brandt, the former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, said in his first governmental declaration in 1969.

This declaration was the beginning of the German Government's programme of action for rehabilitation and integration, which was initiated in 1970. The objectives of this programme were: to open up and take advantage of chances for disabled persons; to integrate them into the labour force and into society; and to afford them full participation in the life of the community.

The results of the action programme - which has existed for more than 20 years and has been updated regularly - are encouraging. We have enacted a number of special laws aimed at the integration of disabled persons; we have services and benefits for the medical, occupational and social rehabilitation

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as integration elements of our general social-security system; we have specialized and efficient centres for the various fields of rehabilitation, especially medical and occupational integration; and organizations for the disabled participate actively in setting the goals and in implementing the programme of action. In my country, the Decade's motto was "Understanding each other, living together".

In the framework of the World Programme of Action, we too have made progress over the last 10 years towards "full participation and equality" and have been able to improve further the already-high standard of prevention and rehabilitation in our country.

Of particular importance in this context is the mandate to submit a report on the situation of disabled persons and on developments in the field of rehabilitation in each legislative period - that is, at four-year intervals - that was given to the Federal Government by our Parliament in 1982. The first two reports were submitted in 1984 and 1989; the third will be available early in 1993.

I believe that the control function served by the discussion of these reports in Parliament is at the same time a constant incentive for Governments not to accept a standstill in the efforts to integrate disabled persons.

When taking stock we can say, without sounding presumptuous, that we have come much closer to the goal of integrating disabled persons in our society. In many areas notable progress has been achieved. An example is to be found in the field of prevention - that is, in the early detection, early treatment and early encouragement of disabled children by means of an increase in the

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numbers of genetic counselling services, socio-pediatric institutions and early-intervention centres.

For decades Germany has had statutory provisions designed to facilitate in particular the vocational integration of disabled persons. During those decades this body of instruments has been further developed. It covers all severely disabled persons, irrespective of the cause of their disability; it assures them of special protection against dismissal and stipulates an employment obligation for all employers with a work-force of more than 15. It also offers major financial incentives and relief to employers who are willing to take on persons with severe disabilities.

The successful integration of the disabled person into the workforce hinges on the avoidance of the double handicap of functional impairment and lack of occupational qualifications. Our concept and philosophy of vocational rehabilitation is therefore geared to compensating - even over-compensating - for physical handicap by means of particularly good job qualifications. In the past four years, therefore, we have not only improved the prospects of on-the-job training for disabled persons but also created a nationwide network of vocational-training institutions to cater for those who, because of the nature or severity of their disabilities, cannot be trained or retrained in a commercial enterprise.

We want, by the year 1994, to achieve two additional goals: long-term-care insurance, and a code for disabled persons. We want to expand our system of social security in order to render necessary assistance also to those who, because of illness or disability, require long-term care. We have separate social-insurance systems for the major risks of life, such as

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sickness, old age, occupational accidents and unemployment. These systems have worked very successfully for more than 100 years. Now we need a fifth pillar in the form of social long-term-care insurance. Benefits are envisaged both for patients being taken care of at home by their families and for patients being cared for in nursing homes.

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Medical rehabilitation measures will be integrated into care-delivery services. We also plan to combine the rights of the disabled in a separate book of our social law. At present, the rights of the disabled, the benefits and the assistance provided to them, are distributed over numerous separate laws. It is very time-consuming to find one's way through them. We want to change this state of affairs and make the rights of the disabled more transparent in order to facilitate their access to them. We are planning a separate code - a Magna Carta of rights, as it were - for the rights of disabled persons.

As a result of the restoration of German unity in the fall of 1990, the Federal Republic of Germany faces tasks that can only be dealt with over a longer period of time. In the territory of the former German Democratic Republic, injustice, inhumanity and oppression were eliminated without delay, as the people living there were guaranteed the enjoyment of such basic rights as freedom to travel, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of association. While all this has led to considerable improvements also for disabled persons living in that part of Germany - the free access to technical aids and the participation in a free international exchange of goods having proved to be particularly beneficial - further reconstruction work is required there to establish services and centres that correspond, in terms of quality and quantity, to those in West Germany. The Federal Government will pursue the efforts already begun in order soon to remand to the past the East-West divide in the field of assistance to disabled persons, which also placed people with mental disabilities at a particular disadvantage.

Despite these great efforts on behalf of the Eastern part of unified Germany, we cannot, and must not, forget the disabled persons in Eastern Europe. For that reason, we have for two years, since the lifting of the Iron

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Curtain, been helping the various countries of Eastern Europe and the successor States of the Soviet Union. The goal is to convert the State systems of social security into an insurance system financed by contributions. We are also assisting in building modern medical and occupational rehabilitation centres. The cooperation thus achieved by way of bilateral relations is considered very useful and effective by both sides.

The purpose of these special plenary meetings of the General Assembly is to take stock after 10 years and to present the results achieved internationally by the Programme of Action.

This is certainly justified and also useful, since we should be glad about the progress achieved for the benefit of the 500 million disabled persons all over the world.

But looking back can only be one side of the coin. The General Assembly must not limit itself to looking back; it must also look to the future.

Our British colleague explicitly said in his statement that

"the essential objectives of the World Programme of Action have yet to be realized." (supra, p. 6)

He will certainly not be contradicted, since the big task of rehabilitating disabled persons and of achieving their full participation in social life is a never-ending process. It is a permanent challenge for society.

Therefore, it is necessary today to look ahead and to discuss further steps to be taken by the United Nations towards the full, or at least partial, implementation of the lofty aims of the World Programme of Action.

And that was also the consensus of the 70 Ministers responsible for questions of the disabled who assembled last week in Montreal at the

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invitation of the Canadian Government. The Ministers were of one mind as to the need to tackle the implementation of the Programme of Action more forcefully and more effectively.

This morning, Mr. de Cotret reported on the results of this first Conference of Ministers responsible for questions of the disabled, elaborated on the Declaration of Montreal, and announced the establishment of an ongoing mechanism. It is of paramount importance that this new instrument established by the Conference of Montreal be applied in close cooperation and coordination with the United Nations and its various institutions and activities.

Allow me to make a few remarks for the future based on our experience in the field of rehabilitation in Germany.

First, I believe we do not need any new resolutions or decisions, nor do we need any new suggestions as to the goals of rehabilitation, as they have already been brilliantly defined in numerous documents over the past few years. We do not need more papers, we now need action.

We need the willingness and determination of the General Assembly to make sure that in the years to come the United Nations will continue to steer the course set by the Programme of Action by taking concrete measures.

As a first step, this requires more specific information on the 500 million disabled persons all over the world. We need specific information on the state of rehabilitation in individual countries.

The Ministers of War or of Defence are much better off. They want to disarm, and they have detailed information about the military situation in their neighbouring countries. They know exactly how many airplanes, tanks, submarines, missiles and bombs their neighhbours have.

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In contrast, the Ministers responsible for the concerns of disabled persons are called upon to "rearm" in order to improve the lot of the disabled. Yet, they know very little about the situation of these persons, their numbers, the nature of their disabilities and their special concerns and needs. We have to change that state of affairs.

Secondly, to that end, we need as objective a yardstick as possible to identify the situation of disabled persons. We need internationally harmonized and uniform evaluation criteria to enable individual Governments to compare their own situation with that in other countries. We need an international questionnaire to investigate the situation of disabled persons and the standard of rehabilitation and integration in each country. Let the United Nations draw up such a questionnaire and let the Governments answer it. But also let the organizations of disabled persons answer it.

Thirdly, Governments play a crucial role and are responsible for the further development of rehabilitation in the individual countries. While it is possible to provide external support, the main impetus must come from Governments themselves. The standard of rehabilitation varies, but in spite of the differences - the standard may be low, medium or high - all countries have to make further efforts, taking into account their special problems. I submit that it would be helpful if every country drew up its own list of priorities.

Fourthly, the necessary assistance must be available to Governments in concrete form, tailored to the respective needs of the individual country, that is, in the form of information, counselling, technical assistance, partnerships, training measures and the services of all types of specialists. Models of rehabilitation units would be helpful for medical, educational or

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vocational rehabilitation. Such models could act as incentives by showing what could be done by effective rehabilitation measures and by demonstrating the need for rehabilitation.

Fifthly, the organization of assistance must be optimal and must be accessible without major obstacles. The United Nations has a suitable instrument for this purpose in the form of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, which could effectively deal with this task, and should be entrusted with it by the General Assembly.

Sixthly, in future, the General Assembly should periodically request information on the progress achieved in the integration of disabled persons - whether yearly or at longer intervals is open to discussion.

(Mr. Jung, Germany)

Paragraphs 194 to 202 of the World Programme of Action provide for constant monitoring and evaluation. This task has been entrusted to the Centre in Vienna. It would be interesting to learn the results obtained so far for the individual countries.

Those are a few specific suggestions for future activities of the United Nations that could help to further implement the World Programme of Action in the years to come.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany will continue its efforts to integrate disabled persons in our country as fully as possible. We are also prepared to contribute our experience and knowledge to the activities of the United Nations and to support them in their necessary future work.

This year, the Decade of Disabled Persons draws to an end, but the World Programme of Action and its implementation must go on.

The current session of the General Assembly should send a clear signal in this respect. It should not reject the outstretched hand of the Montreal Conference of Ministers but gladly take it and embark on a future course jointly with the Conference.

Mr. DENG (China) (interpretation from Chinese): This special meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, the first of its kind in the nearly half-century history of the United Nations, is of far-reaching significance for the protection of human rights and the building of a society for all. It is a great pleasure for me today to have this opportunity to speak before this forum on the issue of disabled persons, who account for one tenth of the world population.

Disabled persons are entitled to enjoy equal rights with their fellow citizens in all aspects of human life, whether political, economic, cultural

(Mr. Deng, China)

or social. Facts demonstrate their ability to fully participate in society, and they are contributors to human wealth as well. To protect their rights, respect their value and give play to their potentiality symbolizes civilization and progress. Our planet is home to over 500 million disabled persons. They and their families amount to a quarter of the population. Impaired by their own disabilities and hindered by the external environment, they are the most disadvangaged and underprivileged group in society. Today human society has progressed to such a stage that, like the emancipation of the nation and of women, the emancipation of disabled persons has become an urgent and arduous task facing the international community.

In keeping with the needs of the times, at its thirty-seventh session the General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. That important decision of historic significance marked a new chapter for a global solution to the disability issue. It has raised public awareness and helped push forward efforts in this field, though to various extents, in different countries. The goals embodied in the World Programme of Action, which aim at enabling disabled persons to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, to participate fully in social life and share the social material and cultural achievements, and the basic principles for their realization have served and will continue to serve as valuable guidance for the future.

Despite the achievements made in the past decade due to the joint efforts of the Governments of all countries, relevant United Nations agencies and disabled persons' organizations, we are still far from reaching our goals. Disabled persons still find themselves in a situation where education and employment opportunities are few and medical care and rehabilitation services

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are inadequate. Their life is very difficult, trailing behind mainstream socio-economic development. The international community should have a full awareness of such a situation. Disability is a social issue of a kind that no countries can neglect or avoid. It is the responsibility of the international community and the Governments of all countries to find a solution to this issue. As the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons is drawing to its conclusion, we wish to put forward the following suggestions to renew the dynamism of the World Programme of Action under implementation and to further promote our endeavours for disabled persons.*

In the course of establishing a just and rational new international order characterized by peace and stability, attention should be paid to social issues in order to achieve economic development in harmony with social progress. In international economic and technical co-operation, the needs of disabled persons, especially those in developing countries, should be taken into full consideration for the rational distribution of resources. United Nations agencies in the field of social development and disabled persons should be strengthened and solutons found to their problems in terms of human and financial resources.

Disability should be listed as a major item on the agenda of the proposed World Summit for Social Development.

United Nations agencies and the Governments of all countries should work out new plans and adopt more pragmatic measures for full implementation of the basic principles of the World Programme of Action in order to give disabled persons more access to education, employment and rehebilitation services and

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* Mr. Dayaratne (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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improve the environment and conditions for their equal participation in social life.

A permanent high-level national co-ordinating body on disability issues should be established and strengthened in all countries in order to organize and co-ordinate more effectively work for disabled persons of multi-disciplinary and inter-departmental nature.

The forty-eighth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in Beijing earlier this year, unanimously adopted a draft resolution sponsored by 33 member States to proclaim the years 1993 to 2002 the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons. It was endorsed at the session of the Economic and Social Council this year. We call upon United Nations agencies and other regions of the world to give effective support to this action, which aims at consolidating and expanding the achievements of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, and to take appropriate measures to promote efforts in this field in various regions.

(Mr. Deng, China)

China is a developing country now undergoing rapid economic growth and profound social changes. In this historical process, in response to the calls of the World Programme of Action, during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, China has taken effective measures to improve the situation of disabled persons in the light of national conditions in China. We have promulgated the Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons, set up mechanisms to coordinate efforts in this area, formulated and begun implementation of two national five-year work programmes for disabled persons, established the China Disabled Persons' Federation, with local branches, adopted preferential and supportive policies for disabled persons, and carried out international exchange and cooperation in this field.

As an example of what has been done, in the last four years 700,000 people who were blind as a result of cataracts regained their sight through operations, 250,000 polio victims underwent orthopaedic surgery, and more than 20,000 deaf children received hearing- and speech-training.

The number of special education institutions has been growing at an annual rate of 20 per cent; special classes affiliated to regular schools have grown in number by 100 per cent; and the number of visually impaired, hearing impaired and mentally retarded children in school has increased by 30 per cent. Welfare enterprises to provide sheltered employment for disabled persons have increased to more than 40,000; 650,000 disabled persons are employed in those enterprises. Disabled persons employed in regular enterprises make up 1 per cent of the total work force. The overall employment rate of disabled persons has risen to more than 60 per cent. In addition, more and more disabled persons are taking an active part in cultural, sports and recreational activities.

(Mr. Deng, China)

Our achievements are remarkable, but many problems still exist. China accounts for a considerable number of the world's disabled persons. We are keenly aware of our responsibilities and the role we can play. In the course of furthering reform and opening up and speeding up the modernization drive, China will strive to meet the needs of its disabled persons and bear its share of international responsibilities and obligations, commensurate with its level of development.

It is our hope that this meeting will have a positive impact globally on improving the situation of disabled persons, thereby contributing to human civilization and social progress.

Mr. NKOMO (Zimbabwe): Zimbabwe, a country striving to be an important collaborator with disabled persons, considers the special plenary meetings on issues relating to the disabled to be among the most important events held by the United Nations this year. We should like to express our appreciation to the Government of Canada for the successful Montreal meeting, held from 8 to 9 October 1992, which mapped out the strategies for the way forward after the Decade and beyond the year 2000. Zimbabwe had the honour of participating in that Conference of Ministers responsible for the status of persons with disabilities.

Regarding the achievements of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the reviews and recommendations of the United Nations Experts meeting in Finland in 1990 and in Stockholm in 1987 indicate that one of the major successes of the Decade has been the international development of the disability movement. One organization that deserves special recognition is Disabled People's International, which in the period in question has spread the call for full participation and equalization of opportunities throughout the world, as envisaged in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

Rights. This organization's success in building a democratic and unified cross-disability movement of disabled persons can be regarded as a success of the United Nations Decade.

We have also observed achievements in the areas of primary health care, prevention and rehabilitation and public awareness. In his report (A/47/415), the Secretary-General further observes that Governments, in close collaboration with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, particularly the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), and other non-governmental organizations, have played an important role in developing and coordinating policies on prevention and rehabilitation. Thus during the Decade the campaign for immunization of children, initiated by WHO, in collaboration with UNICEF, has gained great momentum, particularly in Africa and other developing regions. Success has also been recorded by United Nations agencies in dealing with traumatized children in situations of war and others in especially difficult circumstances.

However, the major components of the World Programme of Action were not addressed, particularly in the developing countries, where there are no adequate resources. The Secretary-General's report rightly points out:

> "The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was proclaimed without provision of additional resources. Existing resources in this area were disproportionate to the magnitude of the tasks and restrained the ability of the United Nations to carry out its assigned functions effectively and efficiently." (A/47/415, para. 25)

Another major failure of the Decade, in my delegation's view, is that, even with the degree of public awareness that the Decade engendered, there is still a lack of participation by disabled people themselves in the decision-making process.

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

If the United Nations were not able to have adequate resources, one would not feel the need to elaborate on the plight of developing countries, particulary those in Africa, where a major cause of disability is poverty. As a consequence, as the economic and social situation of many developing countries deteriorated so did that of the disabled communities. There has been no adequate response from the United Nations or the international community regarding the much-needed resources, especially as most developing countries were embarked on economic structural adjustment programmes at the same time that they tackled famine, disease, hunger and poverty. To add to the burden, outdated and sometimes even dangerous machines, pesticides and medicines, banned in developed countries but exported to the developing world, have caused major injuries, illnesses and disabilities.

In spite of a lack of resources, the Government of Zimbabwe was able to create, before and during the Decade, a positive political climate for disability issues, which encouraged the formation and free operation of disabled-persons associations to enable the greater participation of disabled persons, such as the Zimbabwe Federation of Disabled Persons (ZIFOD). Legislative measures such as the War Victims Compensation Act, the State Services Disability Act, the Social Welfare Assistance Act, the National Social Security Act and, most recently, the Disabled Persons Act of 1992 are but a few indicators of my Government's desire to improve the lot of disabled persons in Zimbabwe.

Indeed, the political goal of Zimbabwe's measures for disabled people is that the disabled should be part of the community and live like others. They should have the same opportunities to earn their living, have a good home, move about and have meaningful jobs and leisure activities. That could only be guaranteed by the introduction of appropriate disability legislation and

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

the empowerment of the disabled. How often the able-bodied have taken advantage of privilege for their own convenience, and yet they cite a thousand reasons for not allocating resources to fund programmes for the disabled.

A major component of the 1992 Disability Act in Zimbabwe is the establishment of the National Disability Board. The majority of its members will come from disabled-persons organizations and the Board will be chaired by a disabled person. As one of its major functions, the Board will work out appropriate programmes to equalize opportunities for the disabled. The Board will also be the focal point for the further development of policy measures in this regard. Indeed, it has a broad mandate.

My delegation is very concerned about the plight of disabled children and women, whose number is on the rise because of situations of war. The 1990 World Summit for Children, which was attended by 71 Heads of State and Government, including my own President, Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, committed itself to improving the protection and development of children, including disabled children, especially those in difficult circumstances.

The United Nations General Assembly's 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which over 100 countries have signed or ratified, sets standards for child survival, health and education, as well as specific goals for protecting all children in difficult circumstances throughout the world.

A review of a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) study reveals that for every child killed, three more are wounded, permanently disabled or psychologically scarred for life by the trauma of war. One finds such children in every area of conflict, including, of course, in Africa, in Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan and Somalia.

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

In keeping with the promises of the above-mentioned Summit, African leaders have called for an international conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on assistance for African children to be held in Dakar, Senegal, from 25 to 28 November 1992. Africa is appealing to the international community to support that conference.

The hardships of disabled women and children, whose burden is twice as heavy because of their disabilities, become more pronounced when Governments are forced to cut down on their national budgets. The barriers to development are still greater for disabled children and women. Women are also faced with gender prejudice and reproductive oppression.

We hope that the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, as it prepares for the World Conference on Women, to take place in Beijing in 1995, will come up with a comprehensive agenda that will have been drawn up with the participation of disabled people themselves.

In Southern Africa, we are experiencing not only the hardships of economic structural adjustment programmes but also the worst drought in living memory. It is not difficult to imagine the suffering of disabled women and children under such conditions.

My Government expresses appreciation to the United Nations and the international community, particularly those countries and non-governmental organizations that responded to the consolidated United Nations/Southern African Development Community (SADC) appeal launched in July of this year. Despite the hardships, shortcomings and experiences of the Decade, we strongly believe that the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons is still the most comprehensive document providing direction for policy development nationally and internationally.

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

Much needs to be done to further the implementation of the Programme of Action, and we should therefore like to propose the following measures and strategies to bring about lasting equality, security, solidarity and democracy: first, that the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and its Programme be proclaimed to extend beyond the year 2000 in order to allow further intensification of activities in the field of disability; secondly, that an international coordinating committee have the mandate to plan activities with the United Nations system to improve the status of disabled persons and to coordinate the activities of the national coordinating committees, and that such a mechanism involve representatives of organizations of disabled people and that it be funded from the United Nations regular budget; thirdly, that disability be considered a priority for international cooperation and technical assistance both in multilateral and in bilateral assistance programmes; fourthly, that the Vienna disability unit be upgraded and strengthened; and fifthly, that adequate support be given to the United Nations Task Force on Disabled Children and Women, which is being coordinated by UNICEF.

Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland): Allow me to offer you, Sir, and the Assembly the apologies of my Minister for Social Affairs and Health, Mr. Jorma Huuhtanen, who indeed had arrived in New York over the weekend but then was recalled to Helsinki by the Prime Minister for urgent cabinet negotiations this afternoon. He asked me to read out on his behalf the statement that he had prepared to deliver to the Assembly, and I shall now proceed to do so.

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

"The overall goal of Finnish disability policy is to integrate disabled persons into society and its various activities. In our legislation and in our society in general, the target is to take into account the needs of all citizens. As we have not been able to include all the services needed by disabled citizens in the system of general services, my Government has decided to complement its general legislation by enacting special legislation that takes into account the needs of disabled persons.*

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* Mrs. Escaler (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

"Thus the Services and Assistance for the Disabled Act entered into force in Finland in 1988. Certainly this enactment was to a great degree due to the supportive and positive atmosphere created by the Decade of Disabled Persons.

"The purpose of the Act is to promote improved conditions for disabled persons so that they can live and participate in society in equality with others and to prevent and eliminate the disadvantages and obstacles caused by disability. Various forms of support and services are rendered to the disabled to make their participation and independent living possible.

"In Finland municipalities are responsible for providing services for their citizens. According to the Services and Assistance for the Disabled Act, municipalities have the responsibility to promote the living conditions of the disabled and to provide the services and support measures they need. The Act supports their opportunities for independent living, for example by securing the right to service housing and transport services for severely disabled persons. Also by virtue of the Act, compensation for the expenses of employing a personal assistant can be paid. Furthermore, the Act aims at improving disabled persons' opportunities to influence society by promoting cooperation between the authorities and organizations of disabled persons.

"The permanent cooperation bodies in Finland are the National Council on Disability and, in most municipalities, councils for disabled persons. One half of their members represent the authorities, and the other the disabled citizens. The councils act as experts on disability and convey information about the needs of disabled persons. They follow

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

up decision-making, issue statements, take the initiative in improving services and transmit information about disability.

"Economic support to organizations of disabled persons has a long tradition in my country. The organizations in turn have been the initiators of many services; they have experimented with and also implemented services. Services that have proved to be successful have then often become part of general services. The work of these organizations continues to be supported, and their impact on the development of our society in general is highly valued. The development of the disabled persons' own organizations is indeed one of the most positive achievements during this Decade of Disabled Persons.

"Education can be mentioned as an example of a successful form of integration during the Decade in Finland. Compulsory education, which can also be called the right to education, includes all children. The educational authorities are responsible for the school attendance of disabled children, and a large part of disabled schoolchildren attend school in their own district or municipality together with other children. Some of the disabled children are educated in special groups or special schools.

"The United Nations has played an important part in highlighting the rights of various special groups such as disabled persons and in increasing awareness about them. Until now it has been considered in Finland that separate legislation prohibiting discrimination against disabled people would not be needed. However, this has unfortunately not proved to be the case in practice. For that reason a Government committee charged with considering amendments to the Constitution has suggested that disability should also be mentioned as a ground for

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

prohibiting discrimination. We hope that this view of the committee will lead to a corresponding amendment of our Constitution. We expect that a prohibition on discrimination against disabled persons will also influence legislation at a lower level and practices in general that may contain indirectly discriminatory conditions.

"I have been speaking about the integration of disabled persons and equal rights for them in society. Situations do not, however, develop in the way one would hope in all respects. As economic depression and unemployment increase, the disabled are the first group whose status is at risk. Being left outside working life and not earning an income also mean limitations on many other spheres in human life. Exclusion from working life is an especially great problem for a disabled person. We regard it as very important that the report of the Secretary-General emphasizes the participation of disabled persons in working life and its significance for economic independence and integration.

"In order to secure further integration we support the Secretary-General's proposal of a comprehensive and coherent policy to further the integration of disabled persons into ordinary life and society. We hope that these targets can be implemented as extensively and as speedily as possible throughout the world.

"The recommendations of the report (A/47/415) also include national affirmative-action plans extending to the year 2002. My Government gives its full support to this proposal and intends to develop such a plan for itself. Such a plan would include the most important principles in the World Programme of Action, namely, prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities.

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

"The report of the Secretary-General also emphasizes the need to take the disability issue into account in multilateral and bilateral cooperation between the Members of the United Nations. We have a long experience of cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries. Disability issues and cooperation between the relevant organizations will play an important part in this cooperation in the future.

"In our view, emphasizing disability issues is especially important where the developing countries are concerned. In these countries, more and more people become disabled because of famine, wars and disasters. Furthermore, disabled persons are the first to be threatened by increasing poverty. That is why we all have a special responsibility for disabled persons in the poorest countries of the world.

"The United Nations Disabled Persons Unit has had very scarce resources at its disposal during the Decade of Disabled Persons. Finland has for its part tried to ease this situation by financing the work of one person in the Unit. We are concerned about the future of this Unit and its resource base. In our opinion it is most important that the work of this Unit receive full support from all of us. We believe that the share of social and humanitarian affairs in the activities of the United Nations in general should be strengthened, and that emphasis on disability issues should be increased. The status of the Economic and Social Council and its Committees should be enhanced and disability issues should thus be further integrated into other United Nations activities.

"As the Decade of Disabled Persons comes to an end, we can on the whole be proud of the positive achievements of the United Nations, which, above all, include the World Programme of Action, the Long-term Strategy,

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

the newly created Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and the work and resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights in the field of disability. These decisions and instruments constitute the fulfilment of many expectations, and their implementation and follow-up will require determined work and many resources in the future. In this respect I believe it necessary that the follow-up work be as fully coordinated as possible so that scarce resources can be used most effectively.

"A recent step forward is the generous offer made by the Government of Canada to strengthen cooperation between the Ministers responsible for disability affairs and to convene regular ministerial meetings on the subject. My Government's stand on this proposal is positive. In this connection we feel that consideration should also be given to how the views of organizations of disabled persons could be sufficiently taken into account in such ministerial meetings and how such meetings could best be interlinked into the broader network of existing forums, and especially into the work of the United Nations.

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

"As the successful Decade of Disabled Persons is coming to an end the Finnish Government sincerely hopes that the future will bring a further equalization of opportunities for disabled persons and that the end of the Decade may be considered as a springboard for a new era."

Mr. VRIETHOFF (Netherlands): It is my honour to address the Assembly today, in my capacity as Chairman of the Netherlands Council of the Disabled and as a member of the Netherlands delegation to the forty-seventh session of the United Nations, on the occasion of the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. I should like to dwell briefly on United Nations policies with regard to persons with disabilities as well as on national policies.

The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons has been of major importance in raising global awareness of the issue of persons with disabilities. The focus of the United Nations should now shift from awareness-raising to action. A more concentrated, coordinated approach to action will enhance progress towards the realization of the objectives of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

Action-oriented projects aimed at improving living conditions for persons with disabilities or at preventing avoidable disability have to be initiated. In particular, projects in developing countries, preferably at the grass-roots level, should be implemented. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 60 per cent of the causes of disability in people residing in the developing countries could be eliminated or averted through effective, low-cost measures. Millions of children with disabilities are unable to gain access to or receive even a basic education because of the lack of appropriate technical devices and equipment.

(Mr. Vriethoff, Netherlands)

Positive results of action-oriented projects should be widely disseminated and should serve as an example for future activities. The same goes for the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, which will be under consideration at the thirty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, to be held in February 1993 in Vienna. Furthermore, in order to make effective use of the scarce resources which are being assigned to disability issues, a much greater coordination of efforts and programme activity among implementing groups, such as United Nations agencies and the non-governmental organizations, needs to be undertaken.

In the Netherlands policy with respect to persons with disabilities emphasis is placed on the individual needs of persons with disabilities, on their full acceptance by and participation in the community and on cooperation with non-governmental organizations in this respect. The Netherlands Government thus endeavours to comply with one of the most important recommendations of the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which states:

> "Member States should encourage the provision of support services to enable disabled persons to live as independently as possible in the community. In so doing, they should ensure that persons with a disability have the opportunity to develop and manage these services for themselves ..." (A/37/351/Add.1, annex, p. 43, para. 115)

The role of non-governmental organizations in the Netherlands with respect to disabled persons includes direct involvement in the organization and management of all kinds of services for persons with disabilities. For the implementation of these activities they receive financial support from the Netherlands Government. To ensure the fine-tuning of policy-making and

(Mr. Vriethoff, Netherlands)

implementation, a consultative structure has been created through which the Government and the non-governmental organizations can confer, with the participation at these management-level consultations of the national organizations acting on behalf of persons with mental and physical disabilities and the organizations representing the facilities serving them.

The Netherlands has a host of facilities for persons with disabilities. Many of these were conceived and realized in response to Government plans and instructions or on the initiative of the non-governmental organizations themselves. Unfortunately, too little account was taken of the individual needs of those for whom the facilities were intended. It was not until the 1980s that small-scale housing projects catering for greater self-sufficiency and privacy were realized. Hence the main criticism of the service system is that, despite the high quality of professional help available, too much is predetermined and not enough is tailored to individual needs. Facilities must be brought as close as possible to the people they are intended to help, so that persons with disabilities can live as independently as possible in our community.

The attitude of the community to persons with disabilities constitutes an important subject. If they are to lead a normal life, social conditions must be favourable. Practical factors such as the accessibility of public buildings and means of public transport are of importance here. But the ultimate factor is the willingness of the community to accept persons with disabilities as valuable and full members of society. A greater degree of understanding and awareness that persons with disabilities share proportionately the same desires, skills, capabilities and potential to be active, participating contributors to the socio-economic growth of their community must be encouraged.

(Mr. Vriethoff, Netherlands)

The Netherlands Government is endeavouring to give people with disabilities a more equal position in society by implementing in national legislation Article 26 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons.

Also in the Netherlands a concerted effort has been made in recent years to improve the public image of the handicapped via the media. The videotape which has been distributed among all Member States is an example of this effort. The efforts and achievements of the United Nations in its work for persons with disabilities have had a positive effect on our internal policy in this field, and we are looking forward to a continued interaction.

Mr. WESTERBERG (Sweden): May I first of all congratulate Ambassador Ganev and his colleagues in the Bureau on their election. I feel confident that we will have a constructive and fruitful Assembly discussion. Certainly the statements that have already been made do not disappoint this hope.

The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons has led to increasing international awareness of the needs and capacities of persons with disabilities. It has stimulated activities throughout the world.

To a very high degree they are the product of the longstanding, persistent and arduous work of the people with disabilities themselves and their organizations.

Sweden was one of the countries that played a very active role in the preparation of the Decade. We were most satisfied to see important

(Mr. Westerberg, Sweden)

elements of our own outlook on policies for people with disabilities reflected in the World Programme of Action, in particular the notion of equalization of opportunity. Our societies have to be planned and adapted to respond to the special needs of people with disabilities. This is a tremendous challenge since it involves such a wide range of policies: education, employment, social services, city planning and transportation, just to mention a few. It requires resources, but it has to be done.

To read the Secretary-General's report is sobering. Much of the World Programme still awaits its realization. We have to use this opportunity to move forward, and the time is right. We meet just a few months after the Rio de Janeiro Conference, which focused attention on environment and development - two notions which have a clear link to policies on people with disabilities. In Rio de Janeiro, there was also emphasis on the needs for special attention in favour of vulnerable groups in society. People with disabilities everywhere are certainly among them; but particular attention has to be given to women and children with disabilities and to the increasing number of old people.

More than 1 billion people on this planet live in conditions of absolute poverty. Every day the number of people with disabilities in the developing countries increases, owing to malnutrition, bad sanitary conditions and a generally unhealthy environment. Governments with inadequate resources for development face enormous difficulties in conceiving specific policies for people with disabilities. No doubt the developed countries have great economic problems today; but this does not absolve us from transferring increased financial and technical resources and working out efficient

(Mr. Westerberg, Sweden)

programmes for supporting action in favour of people with disabilities in the developing countries. This meeting is a good opportunity for the international community to reflect on its responsibility in this regard and to consider carefully the proposals in the Secretary-General's report.

Therefore, the uneven result of the Decade must lead us not to pessimistic passivity, but to new action. The world is now much more willing than 10 years ago to tackle disability issues - not in the least owing to the enormously important work of the organizations of people with disabilities. It is the considered view of the Swedish Government that the progress made towards attaining the objectives of the World Programme results in fact from the vigilance and persistence of the organizations of people with disabilities. They have given concrete substance to one of the catch-phrases of the Year of Disabled People, more than 10 years ago: "Don't look for disability; look for ability".

Our deliberations here should result in the establishment of a realistic basis for a long-term strategy for action in the field of disability by the international community. Anything less than that would mean letting people with disabilities down at the very moment when they have their highest hopes pinned on us. It is certainly incumbent upon us to move beyond the rhetoric which has so often beclouded our vision to a plan for concrete and practical action.

In several countries, national programmes of action have been formulated on the basis of the World Programme to promote their implementation.

(Mr. Westerberg, Sweden)

Thus, there is no lack of recommendations and declarations regarding the rights and needs of various groups of people with disabilities. But unfortunately many share - at least in my opinion - a basic shortcoming, namely a virtual absence of effective mechanisms for monitoring their implementation by the international community and by Member States. Therefore, Member States have been prone to look upon the precepts they contain in a somewhat non-committal fashion, rather than seeing them as a set of rules to guide conduct.

Precisely to improve upon the implementation of the World Programme and its monitoring, and following a Swedish initiative taken at the first regular session in 1990 of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission for Social Development in 1991 established an ad hoc open-ended working group to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities.

A large number of member States have taken part in the work of the group, and the international organizations of people with disabilities have contributed actively to its deliberations and to the successful outcome of its efforts.

The Standard Rules, in our view, form an integral and central part of a long-term strategy of international action. Although they are not legally binding they will provide an important yardstick by which each of us may measure progress.

I should like to underline the fact that we view the integration of disability matters in the general context of social planning as fundamental to the process of realizing the human rights of people with disabilities.

(Mr. Westerberg, Sweden)

I should now like to turn to what I believe should be some of the basic tenets underlying our long-term strategy for international action. First, we need to be clear in our minds as to what we regard as the very concept of disability. What constitutes disability, and how does it manifest itself socially, economically, culturally and politically?

Secondly, do we have the requisite tools for getting our facts straight, so as to be reasonably assured that the various measures we undertake reflect real conditions and problems?

As regards the first item, I share the view that disability ought to be looked upon as one of several natural and inevitable differences between people. Society must be designed for and adapted to all of us. Or, expressed in different words, a disability is not a characteristic of the individual but a relationship between the individual and her or his environment. This attitude to disabilities entails political consequences as regards social planning. It challenges us to design society so that we may all participate in it. My basic assumption is that people with disabilities should not be regarded as a problem but that society should be adapted to suit everybody.

(Mr. Westerberg, Sweden)

Let me now come to my second point. This emphasizes that our views and our measures must reflect actual conditions and thorough comprehension of the facts. Sweden has recently completed a major governmental survey of conditions for people with disabilities. It indicates clearly that, in spite of general improvements in their living conditions, people with disabilities still lag behind others in a number of respects. This is especially true of people with severe or multiple disabilities.

Without doubt, the right to decide for ourselves in matters concerning our own situation is central to the quality of life. The Swedish survey shows, however, that dependency on others is a frequent fact of life for many persons with disabilities. In fact, only a very small proportion of interviewees with severe disabilities consider themselves to be in a position to determine who should provide them with requisite support services.

The survey forms the basis for very far-reaching reforms. I am pleased to have this opportunity to say something about the Swedish Government's disability policy. I should like to point out that, despite the severest and longest recession that Sweden has experienced in the last 60 years, we are not only implementing costly reforms but we are also doing so on the basis of a fundamental approach to disabilities that is very much inspired and supported by the organizations of people with disabilities.

About two weeks ago the Swedish Government decided to propose new legislation to Parliament. The legislation will apply to about 100,000 Swedes, in particular, people with mental retardation and autism; people with considerable brain injuries, and people who, owing to other serious and permanent functional disabilities, encounter substantial difficulty in their daily lives and are in need of extensive support. These people will have a

(Mr. Westerberg, Sweden)

statutory right to personal assistance, counselling and expert help, a contact person, various kinds of respite care, apartments with special services or group homes, and an individual support plan.

The most important of these rights is the right to personal assistance. Personal assistance will enable the individual to decide in what way and in what situations assistance is given. In some cases this may make all the difference as far as job or study opportunities are concerned. Others need a small number of attendants whom they know well so as to make themselves understood and be able to obtain information. For many, this provision of flexible assistance will help them avoid isolation and passivity by limiting their dependence on pre-planned activities: to help them live as independently as possible, as Mr. Vriethoff just put it.

I have outlined here the broad lines of the far-reaching reforms we are now undertaking. It illustrates the commitment of the Swedish Government to pursue policies that are in line with the objectives of the United Nations Decade. But we certainly realize that conditions and opportunities vary from country to country.

In designing and implementing strategies and programmes for international cooperation we must understand and respect national differences with regard to cultural, social and economic background. Rather than just assessing country positions we must seek to build our policies upon the common understanding that all people are fundamentally equal and are all entitled to the same rights.

Mr. MOGULTAY (Turkey) (spoke in Turkish; English text furnished by the delegation): In its welfare policies, Turkey has been laying particular emphasis on the achievement of physical, psychological and social well-being.

(Mr. Mogultay, Turkey)

By including the psychological and social dimensions in our definition of health we have gone beyond the traditional definitions.

At present, war is the cause of disability in millions of individuals. It is to be hoped that in the new world order, this particular cause of disability will be largely eliminated. The quest for domestic and universal peace, which was one of the objectives sought by Ataturk, constitutes a sound basis for establishing a peaceful and healthy environment.

In this age, it is unacceptable to put the handicapped in a separate category from those who are physically fit. Since it is difficult to define the concept of "fit", it would not be proper to insulate from the mainstream those individuals who have physical or psychological limitations.

We must be guided by the principle that the handicapped should enjoy equality of opportunity, be given a chance to develop their abilities and be given priority in training, employment and the provision of social security.

Turkey is a social State, and its Constitution carries provisions for the protection of the disabled and for their integration into the life of the community. The current five-year development plan includes measures to assist the disabled and give them priority. Our Government has also set itself the objective of providing equal opportunity to disabled persons.

During the past 10 years, Turkey has established, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the National Coordination Committee for the Protection of the Disabled to serve as a permanent national mechanism. This Committee develops national policies through an interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach.

With participation at national and local levels, the structure of the Coordination Committee is of an advisory and coordinating nature in all

(Mr. Mogultay, Turkey)

activities connected with the disabled. Within the past 10 years, Turkey has reviewed its basic legislation in order to encourage disabled persons to lead an independent life, to secure their cooperation with the decision-making organs and to facilitate their access to information made available by removing all legislative constraints.

Turkey has also adopted new laws. On 9 January 1992 a special committee was established in our country's Grand National Assembly for the purpose of identifying the problems of the disabled, the measures to be taken and the new policies to be adopted.

Turkey supports the resolutions on disabled persons adopted by the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the European Social Charter, the decisions of the Council of Europe and Convention No. 159 of the International Labour Organisation. Particular attention has been given to the widest possible implementation of these instruments.

The National Coordination Committee for the Protection of the Disabled has published: a Document on Policies for the Disabled, prepared in line with the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons; a Report on Services Rendered for the Disabled, containing evaluations pertaining to the implementation of relevant programmes; a Guide to the Legal Rights of the Disabled; and a Directory of Equal Opportunities for the Disabled. The same Committee has prepared a document setting out the views of all the provincial Governors and the voluntary associations working in this field in Turkey.

(Mr. Mogultay, Turkey)

As a social State, Turkey considers it a duty to ensure that its disabled citizens live their lives in dignity and that they be able to look to the future with confidence. It is through this approach that we fulfil our responsibility to see to it that our disabled citizens prepare themselves for life within the community and actively contribute to it. This responsibility is one that all States must assume.

We have started working on the issue of the disabled in five different special-expert committees. The work is being carried out with the participation of the local administrations, the confederations established by the four groups of the disabled, the members of the mass media and the representatives of banks and the relevant voluntary associations. The analysis and research carried out on the socio-cultural factors influencing the different groups of disabled in various countries will help us to identify priorities when offering our services. We believe in the need for the disabled to participate intensively in all aspects of our work.

Turkey has a relatively young population. For this reason, the problems of disabled children and young people enjoy a higher priority. The training of trainers, the manufacture of prostheses - particularly for children and the young - the improvement of facilities for the health and safety of workers, and the development of special work places have gradually become basic requisites. The overall strategy we shall develop in Turkey will consist of the principles of integration, mainstreaming, and normalization in all phases of life.

Before concluding, I should like to state that it is our aim to create an integral society for all people throughout the world by the year of 2010, a world in which the disabled will be fully integrated with the able. I wish the meeting success in advancing towards this goal. Finally, I should like to

(Mr. Mogultay, Turkey)

state that Turkey supports the designation of 3 December as International Day of Disabled Persons.

Mr. DAYARATNE (Sri Lanka): As the Minister in charge of social welfare in Sri Lanka, it is my particular privilege to participate in this special plenary meeting of the General Assembly marking the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. May I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Canada for sponsoring the International Meeting of Ministers in Montreal on this important subject. That forum facilitated a very useful exchange of views and experiences. These inputs will help in further advancing our collective efforts towards achieving the goals we set ourselves here at the United Nations.

The Decade of Disabled Persons declared by the General Assembly in 1982 proved an important catalyst. It sensitized the world community to a wide spectrum of issues relating to disability. Activities undertaken during the decade have brought to the fore both the plight and the potential of nearly 500 million disabled people. Despite the public awareness generated and the commendable efforts made at the national, regional, and international levels, much remains to be done to harness the potential of disabled persons as full partners in society. At a time when the United Nations seeks to assume the leadership in shaping a more equitable and more humane world order, it is most appropriate that it should renew attention on vulnerable groups such as the disabled. Taking stock at this juncture is therefore timely. The United Nations must build upon the experience of the Decade to sustain the momentum.

In this context, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and forward-looking recommendations contained therein. The report correctly points to the economic and technical disparities among countries and the debilitating economic constraints as

(Mr. Dayaratne, Sri Lanka)

major factors militating against the welfare of the disabled. The experiences of the Member States in implementing the programme of action have highlighted the need for overall economic development in general and the provision of basic needs and sustainable income generation in particular. These remain the basic prerequisites for achieving the goals of the Programme of Action. This need is acutely felt in the most vulnerable of the disabled groups - the disabled poor.

It is evident from our experience during the Decade that more focussed and more goal-oriented action at all levels and in all relevant sectors needs to be formulated and implemented. Good legislation and good institutions alone will not be sufficient. We agree that action at the national level constitutes the most important element and that the emphasis should continue to be on prevention, rehabilitation, and equalization of opportunities. However, action at the national level needs to be supported with the necessary resources and complemented by regional and international programmes. The enthusiasm and support of the non-governmental sector will continue to be vital.

In our own region, we were pleased to support the proclamation by the member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific of a regional Decade of Disabled Persons for the years 1993 to 2002. We hope that other regions will take similar initiatives to pursue this international effort into the twenty-first century. My delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to this effect.

Despite our own economic difficulties and the adverse international economic environment, Sri Lanka has continued its endeavours for the advancement of the disabled. Activities in Sri Lanka are based on the themes of prevention, rehabilitation, and equalization, and involve multisectoral

(Mr. Dayaratne, Sri Lanka)

inputs. The legislative authority for activities undertaken in Sri Lanka derives from the constitutional obligation that:

"legislative and executive action will be undertaken for the advancement of women, children and disabled persons".

While the disabled are given every opportunity to enjoy and realize their fundamental rights and civil liberties, the Government is considering further improvements to the existing legal framework to facilitate the more effective participation of the disabled in society.

In order to give more focussed attention to the welfare of the disabled, in 1989 the Government took a major policy decision to create a separate Cabinet Ministry for Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Social Welfare. This Ministry is mandated to provide policy framework and programme facilities in respect of the needy disadvantaged groups in general, and to relate national social welfare programmes and interventions to the disabled and deprived segments of society in particular. The Government felt it necessary to provide this specialized institutional framework to coordinate policies and programmes in this area in view of an average increase of disability amounting to 1.86 per cent per annum for the period 1981 to 1992. The uneven nature of the distribution of the disabled population in various regions necessitated the close coordination of preventive and response strategies. It was also necessary that programmes be implemented at provincial levels responding to the particular trends and characteristics of the distribution of disability at the regional level.

Adverse socio-economic factors aggravate the plight of the disabled among the poor. A major national programme for poverty alleviation has been launched to enhance the productive potential and income-generating capacity of the low-income groups. The objective is for the disabled also to receive the

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advantage of overall national programmes through the family unit. In Sri Lanka's value system, the family unit represents a key socio-economic institution at the micro-level. It is thus in a unique position to provide a more humane and more cost-effective social security network compared with the expensive and independently-managed support programmes that exist in some other countries. This poverty alleviation programme - the Janasaviya, as it is known in Sri Lanka - seeks to provide both consumption and sustainable investment support for the poor. It aims at harnessing the productive potential of poor families through which the social security of the disabled is also ensured. The programme implementation is well under way.

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A school midday meal programme initiated in 1989 is designed to improve the nutritional standards of some 3.5 million school children. This will continue as an important preventive strategy. In addition, the Government has committed nearly half a billion rupees in the form of public assistance to the needy, the elderly and the socially handicapped. That support also covers the disabled who suffer from chronic diseases.

In the area of education the Government policies and programmes have long advocated the guidelines laid down by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Parliament enacted legislation in 1971 by which a Special Education Branch was established to introduce education of the disabled. This is being implemented through curriculum development, special teacher-training programmes and a monitoring system. We have established 641 schools with facilities for education of the disabled. The distribution of schools responds to the incidence of disability in various parts of the country. There is, however, a need for further improvement to enable disabled children to continue their education up to the level of university or technical college. A sizeable number of disabled children are unable to continue their education owing to the short supply of equipment and textbooks. Action should be taken to mobilize both private and governmental resources to meet these requirements.

Health care for the disabled is provided free of charge through an island-wide system of health facilities. Special care units for the disabled have been established in provincial and base hospitals. An advanced primary-health-care system already available in Sri Lanka complements these special facilities through the provision of home-based health care. However, further support and improvement are necessary to upgrade the existing

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facilities. More equipment and technical know-how are needed to enhance the quantity and quality of the services provided.

The Department of Social Services has established a network of vocational training institutions to enable the disabled to acquire socially and economically usable skills. Specially designed skills-training courses are being given to the trainees according to their aptitude and needs. On completion of their training the trainees are provided with tools and equipment to start self-employment projects so that they may productively integrate themselves into society.

The efforts of both the governmental and the non-governmental sectors in educating and training the disabled would be frustrated if such persons failed to find social recognition through income-generating employment. The Government is therefore considering the feasibility of affording special treatment to disabled persons seeking employment in the public sector.

Another social issue that is being addressed is the reluctance of some to expose the disabled to society because of the mistaken perception that disability represents an element of social backwardness. The neglect of the disabled as a result of social factors has diminished considerably. We should commend the non-governmental organizations for the work done in this difficult area. The Government has pursued action through the community-based detection of handicaps and home-based rehabilitation by volunteers. However, there are residual problems. The Government will continue this effort by assisting, inter alia, a project supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

A national sports body has been established with the support of the Department of Social Services to encourage disabled persons to demonstrate their potential in sports activities. This programme is being implemented

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with a view to enhancing confidence among the disabled and as a part of the overall socio-economic programme to integrate the disabled fully into active society.

A national committee has recently been established to coordinate work pertaining to the disabled sector. This forum is representative of State and non-State agencies, resource personnel and various organizations of handicapped persons. It is expected that this institutional arrangement will focus on the issues and problems of the disabled on a continuing basis and seek appropriate solutions.

Looking ahead, my delegation broadly concurs with the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/47/415, chap. II). The main thrust of the recommendations is that we should move from awareness to action. My Government has already commenced a process of formulating a macro-policy perspective and an action plan for the disabled sector for the coming years. We have also taken action to identify the needs of this sector in the public investment programme for the period 1991-1995. We are pleased to note that the broad policy objectives considered by Sri Lanka are consistent with a number of recommendations being discussed here, namely, to make the disabled population an economically active and socially recognized segment of society. Our aim is to sustain and improve on the specific programmes for the disabled, to make them productive to society and themselves, to mobilize the support of the non-governmental sector, and to expand research and training of social workers. We have already identified sectoral policies, institutional improvements, resource mobilization, areas for research and cost-effective interventions.

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A key factor to success, however, will be the availability of resources in such relevant sectors as education, health care, vocational training and other institutional facilities. Subject to the availability of resources, further improvements would be hastened. The crucial role of the family unit as a social and economic cushion for the disabled needs to receive complementary support of sectoral activities, particularly when specialized attention is needed in such areas as health, education and vocational training. For this, it is essential that national action be augmented by bilateral and multilateral assistance in resources and expertise. As the United Nations moves into an era of international cooperation to ensure social justice, equity and the full realization of the potential of the individual, we hope that necessary support will be forthcoming to ensure the required socio-economic infrastructure, appropriate technological development and transfers, training and financial-resource mobilization supportive of disadvantaged groups such as the disabled and other socially handicapped.

Before concluding, let me pay a special tribute to the non-governmental organizations that have rendered yeoman service to the cause of the disabled and other vulnerable groups. Their endeavours have not been confined to public-awareness campaigns. The commitment and dedication of the non-governmental organizations have been instrumental in translating the public's consciousness into concrete action even in the remotest areas of various countries. Equally, if not more important, the enthusiasm and perseverance of the field worker have been both a tremendous support and an inspiration to open societies like my own to implement various programmes designed to support the cause of the disabled. We in Sri Lanka have had an extremely rewarding experience in coordinating governmental and

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non-governmental activities in this field. We hope to continue this mutually supportive endeavour.

Mrs. MEZHOUD (Tunisia)(interpretation from Arabic): Allow me, at the outset, to express my pleasure at participating in this important and significant commemoration organized by the United Nations. It reflects the importance we all attach to the advancement of the disabled as an integral part of our societies and as a group with an effective role to play in the process of development.

I should like to extend my thanks to the Organization and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for having organized this meeting to take stock of the results of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and to sharpen our focus on questions that require special awareness.

(Mrs. Mezhoud, Tunisia)

I also take pleasure in reviewing the important steps we in Tunisia have taken and the valuable achievements we have accomplished since 7 November 1987 when the President, Mr. Zein El-Abideen Ali, initiated a social policy whose aim is to strike a balance between the requirements of development as well as the needs of vulnerable groups and the need to lay the foundations of a united well-balanced society of solidarity, justice, freedom, democracy and respect for human rights.

This policy of the Tunisian Government has restored to Tunisia its high standing and to the citizens of Tunisia their pride in belonging to it. This has created a climate of trust, tranquility and clear vision, which has motivated the citizenry to redouble their efforts towards the promotion of the process of development in our country. Here we must state that the pursuance of development in Tunisia takes its point of departure from focusing on the needs of all groups, particularly the most vulnerable, so that they may, in their turn, contribute to the development of efforts. In the context of this policy, Tunisia's efforts towards the advancement of disabled persons have become part and parcel of the comprehensive national plan for the general advancement of man.

The achievement of our development goals is linked to the consideration of social peace and to respect for the values of a civil, enlightened and united society. Therefore, we in Tunisia have worked for the promotion of social dialogue and have developed the means by which such dialogue may be conducted with a view to sparing society the causes of tension. All these efforts have had a positive effect in creating a healthy social climate that has contributed to increasing productivity and invigorating the economy, and has enabled us to realize a significant rate of growth, notwithstanding the many challenges and the rapid changes in the international scene.

(Mrs. Mezhoud, Tunisia)

We have also developed a social security system in the conviction that social security is an embodiment of the solidarity between the various groups and generations of society. This coverage has been expanded to include most social groups. It has risen from 52.1 per cent in 1987, to 62 per cent in 1991 in addition to the improvement in services and the development of socially-oriented legislation.

Proceeding from our belief that the safety and prosperity of any society stem from the social health of the well-balanced family unit and its contribution to the development process, the Tunisian Government has provided all the necessary fundamental requirements, namely the laws and decrees that promote the status of women and the family so that they may face up to and deal with the many social challenges and overcome all the deviations and negative phenomena that may impede the process of development. By so doing, we have ensured for women many gains that must place Tunisia in the forefront of nations in the area of promoting the rights of women and family.

Solidarity between all social groups, in the words of President Zein El-Abideen Ali, is an essential prerequisite of progress and of a well-balanced political system. And solidarity and stability cannot be achieved without social justice which is one of the major pillars of our liberation movement.

Proceeding from this, the Tunisian Government has accorded high priority to the advancement of the disabled and to combating the causes of disability, since the prevention of such causes is essential for reducing this phenomenon.

We have promulgated legislation related to the advancement of disabled persons in addition to urging institutions to employ them and to allocate 1 per cent of job opportunities to them. We have established a supreme council for the disabled in addition to developing and retraining social

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educators and trainers in a manner that is commensurate with developments in this field and with the aspirations of the disabled themselves.

In order to enhance the efforts exerted in the field of employment opportunities for disabled persons, Tunisia has developed a national programme to create sources of livelihood for the disabled so that they may be able to engage in productive activites that would ensure for them a steady income from the financial assistance allocated to individual or collective enterprises. Since 1987, the programme has benefited some 2,900 disabled persons by providing gross allocations estimated at US$ 2.8 million.

We have also tried to mobilize financial resources for funding the programme for the advancement of disabled persons. These resources have improved significantly, particularly since 1989, following the earmarking of a special account in the budget through which society contributes to financing the enterprises of disabled persons. The account is funded from taxes on production and from the sale of postal stamps.

We have made sure that every family and every society shoulders the responsibility of caring for the disabled. We have encouraged the setting up of societies by developing the appropriate legislative framework for donations as well as by tapping the potential of goodness in members of society. We have also earmarked significant allocations which are advanced, in the form of grants, to those societies. Those grants have enabled the societies to develop and implement programmes that have become a valuable tributary to the Government's work in the area of caring for the disabled.

Recognizing the importance of the role of rehabilitation in the drive to integrate the disabled into society, we have focused special attention on the areas of education and vocational training. This has resulted in the setting up of 120 special centres that train approximately 4,000 disabled persons.

(Mrs. Mezhoud, Tunisia)

However, these efforts, which stem from the concern of the Tunisian Government over the problems of the disabled and from the solidarity of all parties, are inadequate, in our view. Therefore, we have initiated the formulation, within the framework of the eighth plan of development, of a number of projects to strengthen preventive efforts and to make possible early identification and diagnosis by the network of regional units. We have set up, for that purpose, 20 new units. In addition, we have focused on enhancing care, rehabilitation and education activities by increasing the number of special centres, from 80, in 1987 to 120, in 1992. At the same time we have expanded social services so that they may cover as many disabled persons as possible.

(Mrs. Mezhoud, Tunisia)

We believe that every effort on the national level is closely linked to the international support it may receive. We believe that the exchange of expertise and experience on the international level is essential. It is also essential to make use of the existing international capabilities in the service of noble goals. This would provide the best motive for further efforts and for the attainment of the well-balanced socities we all desire.

Hopefully, the results of the meeting of Ministers responsible for the advancement of the disabled, which was held in Canada on 8 and 9 October, will be of help in this context. I hope that consultations will mark a new beginning towards putting into effect the Special Programme for Disabled Persons. We hope that the international community will continue to focus attention on the prevailing social situation in the world in the context of the efforts aimed at restructuring the United Nations, and hope that the summit on social development to be held in 1995 - the convening of which Tunisia supported - will be the culmination of the unremitting efforts by the United Nations in its new era.

Mr. DAVILA (United States of America): I am pleased to be here today to represent the United States as we celebrate the close of the Decade of Disabled Persons.

We are proud of America's accomplishments in the last decade on behalf of people with disabilities. We have continued to move away from paternalistic attitudes and segregated programmes and towards respectful attitudes and inclusive programmes. As a nation, we have reaffirmed our commitment to a fundamental principle upon which our nation is founded: equal opportunity for all citizens. We have proclaimed this principle very explicitly for people with disabilities by enacting landmark civil-rights legislation - the Americans with Disabilities Act.

(Mr. Davila, United States)

But we are mindful of the fact that enactment of a law, great as that law may be, does not instantly create a society of equal opportunity. People with disabilities must have the skills and the resources to exercise their hard-won rights under the law. Civil-rights protections do not entitle people with disabilities to jobs. Our laws protect people with disabilities who are "qualified" to compete in the workforce.

So, in order to be successful in the workforce, people with disabilities must come to the workforce as "qualified" competitors. A "qualified" competitor is an educated competitor, a trained competitor, a competent competitor. Our country has developed comprehensive systems of education and rehabilitation for people with disabilities to ensure that they can attain the label "qualified".

This year we serve nearly 1 million people in our nation's comprehensive vocational-rehabilitation programmes. Operating in all 50 states, we provide rehabilitation services to people with a wide range of disabilities, including physical, sensory and mental impairment. We provide services ranging from college tuition to retraining for a new profession.

We are especially proud of our "supported employment" services, which offer support for integrated work to severely disabled persons who were previously thought to be unable to work in integrated settings. We now know that there is virtually no one with a disability who cannot work in an integrated setting if the proper supports are provided.

Our vocational-rehabilitation services are most effective when they work directly with the private sector. We have established numerous partnerships with businesses. By this means we assist businesses to find workers with disabilities who are qualified for the particular jobs that are open. In this

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way we make life easy for employers. We learn about their openings, and through appropriate education and training programmes we help them to find qualified people with disabilities.

The fastest-growing segment of those that we serve comprises people with psychiatric disabilities. Of all people with disabilities in our country, those with psychiatric disabilities face the greatest discrimination and often present the greatest challenge to employers. Much of our work during this decade and the next will be in discovering better ways of providing training and support for workers with psychiatric disabilities.

Our nation is proud to have a right-to-education law - the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law, which was enacted in 1975, has been critical in enabling people with disabilities to become "qualified". It entitles every child with a disability, no matter how severe, to be educated. This education takes place in what we call the least restrictive environment. This means that children are educated to the maximum possible extent alongside their non-disabled peers.

Before the enactment of this law many of our children were not permitted to attend public schools. Their parents were often told that they must keep them at home or send them to institutions. We have come a long way since those days. Today no child, no matter how severe his or her disability, can be denied an education. This is a critical cornerstone in our efforts to ensure that people with disabilities are "qualified".

Our country is also proud to support centres that are dedicated to the enhancement of independent living for people with disabilities. We have hundreds of these centres across the country, and they are invaluable

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community resources for people with disabilities. Controlled and managed entirely by people with disabilities, they offer a wide range of support services, including personal-assistance services, training in money management, and information-referral services.

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These centres serve people with all kinds of disabilities, including learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and sensory and mental impairments. They provide technical assistance to businesses that are learning how to make their workplace environments and their jobs accessible to people with disabilities.

Today Americans with disabilities enjoy more opportunities than ever before. My being here before the General Assembly, having been deaf since the age of eight, is evidence of that fact. In America people with disabilities are achievers at the highest levels. We study for advanced degrees; we become doctors and lawyers; we are actors; and, yes, we are Government officials. Our institutions and the individuals at the highest levels of Government - President Bush, the Congress of the United States and senior Government officials - are committed to a policy of maximum independence and participation for people with disabilities.

We are pleased to share the results of our efforts in America with our partners throughout the world as we work towards the goal of increased participation of people with disabilities in every aspect of life. I am pleased to announce today that my own Department - the Department of Education - will host a western hemispheric conference on persons with disabilities in December in order to develop an action plan continuing the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons into the next decade and the next century. I am proud to invite the nations of the western hemisphere to this conference in order to work in partnership with us so as to assess our mutual concerns and the status of rehabilitation cooperation between our diverse nations.

One area of special pride for us in America is the scope of our services for families. As I travel throughout the country, I am struck by the fact

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that all parents want the same thing for their children: a quality education, giving them the skills and ability to achieve their full potential. Our Government continues to be committed to parental and family empowerment, in order that we may maintain a strong role for parents and families as part of America 2000 - President Bush's education reform programme for this nation. Empowerment of families and adults with disabilities becomes even more important as time goes by, and our nation takes it very seriously.

These are challenging times for people with disabilities in America and around the world, and I truly believe that the future is really very bright. Never has there been so much activity on so many different fronts designed to further the full participation of disabled individuals in every aspect of society. Every sound piece of research, every well-structured and implemented programme, every piece of legislation based upon the philosophy of equality and every international partnership will bring new opportunities for further activity, growth and success.

Our laws recognize the value of international exchange as a means of increasing the levels of skill and rehabilitation personnel world wide. As part of our mandate through my own Department, some 25 special education, rehabilitation and independent-living researchers and consultants are exchanged with foreign nations each year. The data from these visits form a large, accessible library for all international scholars and practitioners to incorporate the best approaches from all over the world.

Our nation now has comprehensive systems of education and rehabilitation in place to ensure that citizens with disabilities can be qualified to compete for jobs. During this decade we have enacted a non-discrimination law to

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ensure that places of employment are accessible and inclusive of persons with disabilities. The work of our next decade will require fine-tuning to be sure that the systems are working and to ensure that the non-discrimination mandate is being followed. We also need to ensure access to adequate health insurance for all persons with disabilities, access to comprehensive personal assistance services and access to needed assistive technology.

We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to the challenges of the next decade and the next century with optimism. We have witnessed remarkable accomplishments in this decade, and we are confident that we will witness more in the years to come.

Mrs. KELTOSOVA (Czechoslovakia): As the extent of democratization of a society can be measured by the rights and freedoms exercised by the most simple citizens, so the level of care that that society provides to its citizens can be assessed by the care it gives to the most vulnerable of them.

In 1982 the Government of what was then the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic adopted relevant resolutions on the conclusion of the International Year for Disabled Persons, which were formally in compliance with the recommendations of the General Assembly as contained in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. It also adopted a 10-year plan of measures for carrying out the tasks contained in the relevant documents, and established a working group consisting of representatives of individual jurisdictions, of the United Organization of Disabled Persons and of experts for the coordination of tasks related to the care of disabled persons.

(Mrs. Keltosova, Czechoslovakia)

Implementation of those measures was, however, negatively influenced by the socio-political situation in the country, as well as by the fact that individual items of that plan were built upon a centrally directed and strictly planned State economy and upon some practices of the totalitarian system in the field of social care for the handicapped. It was thus joined with the tendency to isolate and segregate disabled persons into homes, while assuring their elementary conditions of life.

Changes in the political system after 1989 brought more favourable conditions for putting forward the justified requirements of all handicapped persons who claimed not only the possibility of placing themselves among the healthy population but also participation in the decision-making processes and all other areas of life in harmony with the International Bill of Human Rights and other international human-rights instruments.

The elimination of discrimination against disabled persons requires not only the gradual removal of architectonic, transport and communication barriers, but also intensive public education to bring about understanding of the rights and dignity of every human being. Therefore disabled persons should not just receive care or even be condemned to substandard services and dues and have a minimal standard of living; rather, they should be allowed improved access to education and increased knowledge of disability. The fact that one's health is affected should not be reason for discrimination or reduced living standards for a family with a handicapped member.

Disabled persons can be treated in accordance with their individual abilities and qualifications and can have equal opportunities through their remaining, to the extent possible, in the most human environment, the one most beneficial for them: the family.

(Mrs. Keltosova, Czechoslovakia)

Because these objectives call for a complex multi-disciplinary approach, closer collaboration among professionals from many varied backgrounds, and co-operation among the disabled themselves and non-governmental humanitarian organizations, the Government of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic has adopted - in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/96, on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons - a set of steps to create legal guarantees for full-value self-realization and integration of disabled persons into society.

Governmental committees for handicapped persons were established in both Republics in 1991. They are headed by a member of the Government, and co-operate with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and organizations of the handicapped. The committees are mandated to prepare and coordinate legislative arrangements concerning the handicapped, links of medical, labour and social rehabilitation, and the constitution of a new model of care for disabled children and youth.

A lot of work has been done in both Republics. At the beginning of 1991 the Department of Health and Social Care for the Handicapped was founded under the Czech Ministry of Health. It is the Ministry's endeavour to create a network of centres for medical rehabilitation that would enable complex care for the handicapped. In July of this year, the Czech Government approved a national plan for help to disabled persons, including a number of ministerial and departmental commissions so that the situation of this vulnerable group of our society could improve.

In the Slovak Republic, "Precautions for Actual Problem-Solution in Care for the Handicapped during 1991-1992" has been elaborated to ensure the functioning of an advisory and initiative body with the simultaneous provision of direct coordination of the work of governmental and non-governmental

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organizations in the area of living-standard development for persons with disabilities in order to integrate them into everyday life. The acquisition of information on legal claims by the handicapped arising from effects upon their health has been improved - for example, by the establishment of the Centre of Technical and Information Services for the Blind and Partially Blind, and the Audio Centre for the Hearing-impaired.

Legislative work on the establishment of both a new social-welfare system and an insurance system based on market-economy principles and taking into account existing socio-economic conditions, including the establishment of the Institute of Ombudsmen, is under way. Significant legislation to be enacted will be represented by a law on disabled persons. Its major objective is to protect them from discrimination, to remove the monopoly of the State from this field, and to transfer responsibility for the procurement of equal conditions in all fields of life to the respective institutions. As in the new welfare system, a number of specific issues related to disability will be handled by disabled persons themselves, as well as by their organizations.*

My delegation has carefully studied the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action and the United Nations Decade for Disabled persons (A/47/415). Unfortunately I cannot but express our agreement concerning his evaluation of the situation and implementation of the Decade's targets. Despite multiple activities at the national and international levels, progress in attaining the main goals of the Programme of Action has been slow. If the present negative trends continue, there is a risk that disabled persons may increasingly be relegated to the margins of

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* Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mrs. Keltosova, Czechoslovakia)

society. Despite the many repeated resolutions of the United Nations and related bodies, most Governments did not adopt decisive measures that would effectively improve the situation.

While much yet remains to be done, we are optimistic because three major United Nations documents in this sphere - the Programme of Action, the long-term strategy and the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities - will cover comprehensive policy making and implementation efforts. They will serve as guidelines for all nations to convert them into daily practice. Therefore my delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his report.

My delegation also welcomes the working course and the results of the first meeting of the International Conference of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, held last week in Montreal, Canada, in which we participated actively.

Our representative took part in the Ad Hoc Working Group to Elaborate Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons, which has just fulfilled its mandate by approving a set of 22 draft rules along with the proposed mechanisms to monitor their implementation. We welcome the successful outcome of the Working Group - achieved in record time - which will constitute guidelines for the welfare of disabled persons on a national level.

In this respect, given my own experience, I appreciate the role played in the further development of international co-operation in the social field by the United Nations in Vienna, particularly its Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Assistance.

(Mrs. Keltosova, Czechoslovakia)

I avail myself of this opportunity to mention a decision taken in my country to seek affiliation with the International Centre for Family Studies in Bratislava. Such an affiliation would represent a very concrete follow-up to the International Year of the Family. My delegation, in its statement on item 93 in the Third Committee, will inform that forum about this matter in a more concrete manner.

My delegation attaches great importance to convening the Conference of European Ministers responsible for social affairs, to be held in Bratislava in 1993. Regardless of whether changes are made in the constitutional set-up of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, as we have already stated on other occasions, both succeeding States consider it their incumbent duty to abide by all their obligations to the international community, and they are ready to cooperate in the organization of that conference. This should be an opportunity for all European countries to exchange opinions on further activities in all fields of social policy and should also be a source of inspiration for Governments in the implementation of their social policies.

Mr. MAIER (Austria): At the outset, I should like to thank the United Nations for providing a full sign-language interpretation during these special meetings of the General Assembly. It is the first time, in my experience, that a complete sign-language interpretation has been available at a United Nations meeting. I am particularly grateful to the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, Mr. Hans Hoegh and Mr. John Strome of the United Nations Office in Vienna, who have been instrumental in bringing about this type of interpretation, so necessary for all those who otherwise could not follow this important debate on the issue of disability.

(Mr. Maier, Austria)

The Austrian Federal Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Josef Hesoun, who is responsible for persons with disabilities in my country, was forced, because of important political meetings in Vienna, to cancel his planned participation in these meetings of the General Assembly. On his behalf, I ask members to accept his apologies.

Austria welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons with special meetings of the General Assembly. My country attaches great importance to all measures aimed at improving substantially the situation of disabled persons. The Austrian Federal Minister for Labour and Social Affairs will present, at the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, a national plan for disabled persons that will constitute the guidelines of the policy of the Federal Government of Austria on disabled persons. Those guidelines are based on the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

Disabled persons face special problems and are also affected by difficult situations in our society, such as unemployment and sometimes unsatisfactory social integration. We consider it an important function of an advanced social policy to guarantee to all disabled persons an independent life and unlimited participation in economic and social development. During the United Nations decade of Disabled Persons, it was possible to achieve in Austria many of the aims set by the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

Austrian policy concerning disabled persons is based on an integral vision of the human being, whose physical, spiritual, psychological and social needs must equally be taken into consideration. Medical and professional rehabilitation as a measure of integration has reached a very high standard in

(Mr. Maier, Austria)

Austria. Two examples illustrate that standard: medical health care at home, paid for by social health insurance, was recently included in the catalogue of services of public health insurance. With respect to professional rehabilitation, the numerous options for supporting the employment of seriously disabled persons in the workforce have been increased by giving additional subsidies to employers for creating additional training and working possibilities for disabled persons in specific areas.

In many cases the cause of the disability determines which rehabilitation methods will be used. Thus, persons born with a disability or who were disabled prior to their entry into professional life are discriminated against, as rehabilitation is often closely connected with professional activities. Social rehabilitation should be given additional importance. Finally, the combination of medical, professional and social means of rehabilitation still need to be improved.

In order to improve further the situation of disabled persons in Austria, the objectives of Austrian policy on disabled persons in the future will be the following:

First, the utmost realization of the principle of universality in the integration and rehabilitation of disabled persons. This means that treatment would not differ depending on the cause of disability and represent a further step towards equal access to means of rehabilitation.

Secondly, better cooperation by different rehabilitation institutions to ensure a nationwide unified source of treatment.

The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has, therefore, with the help of the work done during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, created the basis for reforming care provisions. In the near future,

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a draft bill will be presented to the Austrian Parliament providing for all persons in need of care, independently of the cause of their need, consistent financial support and payment commensurate with their need. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs intends to continue and if possible intensify international cooperation, mostly implemented on a bilateral basis, in order to qualify trainers or through transfer of technology in connection with technical aid.

(Mr. Maier, Austria)

The Federal Government will continue to support international activities leading to a better attainment of the rights of disabled persons. These include the pertinent activities of the United Nations, in particular those of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna, and the activities of the Council of Europe and the International Labour Organisation with regard to disabled persons.

Last week, at the invitation of the Government of Canada, the International Conference of Ministers responsible for the status of persons with disabilities took place in Montreal, with no fewer than 70 Governments participating. The Austrian delegation at that Conference found it highly encouraging that a great number of States Members of the United Nations, by participating at the ministerial level, demonstrated their political will to attach the greatest importance to the multilateral social activities of the United Nations, in particular in the field of disability. The Ministers assembled in Montreal furthermore expressed their serious concern about the inadequate resources allocated for social questions in general and for United Nations activities on disability in particular.

The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna was established as the focal point for all multidisciplinary activities concerning social questions within the United Nations system, including the Disabled Persons Unit. In that context, it should be mentioned that in paragraph 156 of the World Programme of Action, the Centre was also designated as the focal point for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the World Programme of Action, including its review and appraisal. In line with that, my delegation is pleased to note that at the seat of the Centre a few days ago standard rules on the

(Mr. Maier, Austria)

equalization of opportunites for persons with disabilities were finalized by a working group set up at the last session of the Commission for Social Development.

This special meeting of the General Assembly is putting emphasis on the activities of the United Nations in the field of social development and humanitarian affairs. We hope that this emphasis is shared by all Member States and that it can be transformed into a better awareness of the personnel and financial needs of the units concerned. We cannot expect the units of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna to be able to take on enlarged functions entrusted to them by Member States without being given adequate resources.

Mrs. NAPSIAH (Malaysia): Let me begin by congratulating the President on his election to preside over the United Nations General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. I am confident that under his wise guidance the Assembly will achieve satisfactory results.

May I also thank the Secretary-General for his statement and his comprehensive report entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons" (A/47/415). The report is a valuable document that contributes to our efforts to assist the disabled.

I should also like to thank the Government of Canada for organizing the International Conference of Ministers responsible for persons with disabilities in Montreal from 8 to 10 October 1992.

We have now reached the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. However, as indicated in the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report, the objectives established in the Programme of Action contained in

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General Assembly resolution 37/52 of 1982 have not been fully achieved. Although many reasons contributed to that disappointing result, the basic contributory factor has been identified as lack of resources. There is a real danger, therefore, that the needs of the disabled, especially in the developing countries, will be neglected by Governments in favour of the more urgent and desperate needs of other sectors of society. We have to appreciate this fact, as it is a real problem in poor developing countries.

Nevertheless, efforts must be made through long-term planning to make a contribution, no matter how small, to care for and rehabilitate the disabled, because disability is a an enduring problem, and all the signs are that the problem of disability will keep on increasing consonant with the expansion of population and the association of many types of disabilities with old age. For these reasons, national and both multilateral and bilateral efforts must be made to find the resources needed to assist in the planning for, and achievement of, the goals set in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The recommendations in the Secretary-General's report therefore merit our fullest consideration.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, in the planning of national policies and programmes for the disabled we need to focus our attention on three basic aspects: prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities for the disabled. Perhaps much could be done in the area of prevention, as over the years millions of people have been left disabled as a result of war. Today we have entered a new era of international relations in which, hopefully, differences between nations may never again have to be settled by violence. This, however, is contingent on our ability to create the kind of cooperation in the management of international peace and security

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envisaged when the Charter of the United Nations was drafted. It can clearly be seen from recent and current events that we are still far from achieving that objective, and there is a necessity at least to modify the existing system. We need to establish effective and peaceful means of conducting international and domestic relations to avoid violent confrontations. In this sense, the Secretary General's report entitled "An Agenda for Peace" has given us a good basis from which to start.

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Emphasis on public health is another effective way of reducing the risk of disabilities. Overcoming the problem of malnutrition and institutionalising the effective control and treatment of diseases that can cause disabilities, such as hypertension, diabetes, leprosy and poliomyelitis, will go a long way towards preventing disabilities. At the same time, research into debilitating diseases such as arthritis, rheumatism, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and schizophrenia must be intensified to understand their causes and the most effective treatments of patients afflicted by them. Proper pre-natal and post-natal care is also vital to ensure healthy children, and immunization must be emphasized in caring for the young.

Governments can contribute to changing people's attitudes towards, and beliefs about, the importance of medical care through emphasis in education and by enacting legislation. However, unless Governments can provide those services cheaply or gratis, the population will be less than inclined to pay any attention. There is therefore a need for this body and its agencies, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the various United Nations regional Commissions, with the cooperation of donor countries, to intensify efforts made in assisting developing countries to provide medical care for their citizens. Care must also be taken to avoid any duplication of function between those agencies that could result in the waste of precious resources.

The technological and industrial age we live in today is not without its hazards. Modern modes of transportation also mean increased risks of road accidents. Modern machinery increases the risks of industrial accidents,

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contributing to greater numbers of disabled people. These are two of the common causes of disabilities. They can be reduced by a number of means, including legislation. At the same time, people should be given proper insurance coverage, so that in the event of disability by accident their future can be guaranteed and they do not become a liability to society.

After the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, we should also be fully aware that many things that we do have negative impacts on the environment and, indirectly, on us. We read reports of children born mentally retarded, with damaged eyes and deformed limbs, disabilities attributed to their mothers' having been exposed to a polluted environment. Obviously, there is a need for us to reduce these risks through coordinated efforts of education, incentives and legislation. The United Nations could contribute by a study of how Governments may cost-effectively plan and implement such coordination.

The rehabilitation of the disabled must also be given serious consideration. I personally do not believe that people with disabilities wish to be a burden to society. Even if some of them do, we cannot encourage it, as the economic cost to society will be astronomical. Programmes must therefore be drawn up to build their self-esteem, confidence and dignity to enable them to participate fully and equally with other members of society. Serious measures must be taken to provide disabled persons with education at all levels and training in vocational skills according to their potential. Education and training in this age is the key to survival, especially in industrialized societies; everyone, including the disabled, must therefore have equal opportunity to acquire education and vocational training. To this end, special classes and schools should be established to meet the educational

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needs of the various categories of disabled persons and at the same time to assist them in securing gainful employment.

One of the drawbacks of modern market-oriented society is the lack of compassion, by virtue of which the chances of the disabled securing jobs in the business sector are not bright. Governments could therefore enact legislation to establish affirmative action for the employment of the disabled. Governments can also contribute by reserving places in a certain percentage of their workforces for disabled persons; by encouraging positive perceptions of the disabled through campaigns to make the public aware of the abilities of disabled persons; and by encouraging the private sector to employ them. As an incentive, employers of disabled persons should be given tax deductions.

Caring for disabled children can be trying and expensive. Therefore, parents of children with disabilities should be provided with tax relief to encourage caring for their children and to ease their financial burden. In addition, further tax relief should be given for the purchase of equipment used to compensate for handicaps.

Community-based rehabilitation programmes should be given greater emphasis to enable rehabilitation facilities to be provided at the community level, and the Government should be fully committed to increasing, improving, financing and sustaining these programmes. At the same time, other alternatives to institutional care, such as group homes, home help and fostering, should also be explored. In this area, the role of voluntary organizations and non-governmental organizations should be given emphasis and encouragement, for their contributions can go a long way in stretching budgets.

In planning for programmes, we have experienced a serious drawback in the availability of data. To establish well-thought-out, comprehensive and

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effective programmes, each country should conduct a sort of epidemiology study to collect and collate data on all types of human disabilities and design their programmes around observations and conclusions resulting from those data.

Apart from providing education and training in living and vocational skills and assisting the disabled to find employment, Governments should also introduce programmes of benefits and incentives for destitute disabled persons. Examples include a disabled person's incentive allowance; launching grants to start off small businesses or cottage industries to encourage self-reliance; and the provision of artificial aids and orthopaedic appliances. With regard to the last benefit, I agree with the Secretary-General's report that artificial aids and orthopaedic appliances developed and produced in developed countries are often inappropriate for local use and are expensive. I therefore support his suggestion that this equipment should be produced in developing countries with technical help and investment from developed countries.

To enable the disabled to participate fully in society, physical barriers to the disabled that we take for granted must be removed. Because of lack of resources, developing countries may never be able to implement certain actions mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. Deciding to provide special buses and modify vehicles to cater for the needs of the disabled may require the revamping of an entire transportation and traffic system, which can be very expensive. Other measures, however, can be implemented slowly, in stages, until the whole process is completed. Governments should be able to implement measures such as removing barriers to access to buildings and pavements through legislation and incentives to participants.

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In this regard and consonant with the objectives of the Decade of the Disabled, over the years Malaysian society, which has become increasingly aware of the needs and constraints of disabled members of society in regard to barrier-free access, has, of its own volition, provided amenities and facilities in its buildings. As the extent of such facilities was limited, the Government has established A Code of Practice for Access and Facilities for Disabled People to Public Buildings, whereby an amendment to the Uniform Building By-Laws has been effected. This makes it mandatory for all public buildings to comply with the requirements of the Code. Another regulation, called the Code of Practice for Access for Disabled People Outside Buildings, is currently being prepared and is expected to be ready in due course. When both Codes are implemented disabled persons are expected to have better access and mobility so that their earning capacity and quality of life will be enhanced.

The disabled should also be assisted and encouraged to participate in various sporting activities whether at the national, the regional or the international level. Malaysia has established a biennial sporting meet or "paralympics" for the disabled in which other disabled people in Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries have also participated. Those who have excelled have been given the same financial support for training and coaching as that given to our sportsmen and sportswomen who have brought honour to our country.

On behalf of Malaysia, I am proud to announce that our programme of action with respect to the disabled is on a par with what has been suggested by the Secretary-General. We may not yet have achieved all targets but our efforts are making steady progress. The Malaysian Government is committed to

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the welfare and well-being of its disabled citizens, young and old, male and female. Over the years, the Government has introduced various policies and programmes to ensure that disabled citizens of our country enjoy a meaningful life. In fact most of the suggestions that I have made in this statement have already been implemented in Malaysia.

The International Year of Disabled Persons followed by the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons with its World Programme of Action saw Malaysia moving ahead with the various policies and programmes designed to improve the quality of life of disabled persons. One of the important milestones in the development of social welfare in Malaysia is the promulgation of a policy called the National Welfare Policy with the aims of creating a society that upholds the spirit of self-reliance, equalizing opportunities for the less fortunate and fostering a caring culture.

Even though the Government has provided every assistance to the disabled through its various policies and programmes, these still have to be reviewed from time to time to meet the needs and challenges of changing times. To this end the Government has established a National Advisory Committee comprising experts from various Government departments and individuals to look into the various needs of the disabled and make recommendations to the Government, taking into consideration the provisions contained in the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning the Disabled. This Committee's recommendations coupled with the Government's commitment through its caring-society concept and programmes will ensure a better quality of life for the disabled in Malaysia.

The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons has now come to a close but that should not mean the end of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, because the quest to help the disabled, I feel, is only

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beginning. Instead, we should redouble our efforts to achieve those targets politically, economically and socially, covering all aspects of disability.

In the political field, we must work towards a better order of management of international security and crisis management through preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and peacemaking, which, if successful, will indirectly reduce the incidence of disabilities.

Economically, there must be concerted efforts bilaterally through, for example, the provision of technical assistance by one country to another on caring and training of the disabled, and multilaterally at the regional and international levels. In this regard I take this opportunity to congratulate fellow member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on the proclamation of 1993 to 2003 as the regional Decade for the Disabled. I am also happy to note that the United Nations is already working on a long-term strategy with specific targets to be achieved within a definite time-frame and the establishment of standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons to augment the Programme of Action that we established in 1982. The United Nations is certainly the most suitable agency to take the lead in this field given its human resources and experience.

However, there is need for the United Nations and its agencies to coordinate its work properly to avoid duplication of functions and waste. In this regard, the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, in Vienna, should look into ways of heightening its efficiency in coordinating the activities of the United Nations in this field. In this respect, I should like to draw attention to paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report, which indicates that various United Nations agencies have produced guidelines and manuals on key disability issues. I am inclined to believe that those manuals could be provided more cheaply if those

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agencies worked together to produce one comprehensive set of guidelines or manual. Perhaps we can include the issue on the disabled as one of the items to be considered during the world social summit that is to be convened in 1995. There, we could elaborate on how the work of the United Nations and its agencies could be coordinated effectively.

Socially, Governments need to redouble their efforts in heightening public awareness of the plight of the disabled; in establishing social policies and social programmes for the disabled that will include providing for financial and physical security; in integrating the disabled into the mainstream of society; and in reducing the risks of disability. It is hoped that through all these efforts the disabled will have a much better hope for the future than before.

Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Mongolia): This is the first time the General Assembly has taken up the issue of disability in plenary meetings. We applaud the fact that it is doing so now and consider it to be a recognition by the international community of the urgency and acuteness of this pressing problem. The presence among us of representatives of disabled persons and their participation in our discussions will be of great value in better understanding the issues involved.

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Mongolia)

We listened with great attention to the thought-provoking and meaningful statements of representatives of non-governmental organizations during this morning's special segment.

Earlier today Ambassador Mustafa Akşin of Turkey spoke on behalf of the States members of the Asian Group. My delegation fully subscribes to his statement.

As we mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, we are given a good opportunity to sum up the work already accomplished, to identify the major challenges that lie ahead and to reaffirm our commitment to the practical implementation of the World Programme of Action beyond 1992 with a view to attaining the objective of a society for all.

Among the major achievements of the Decade we wish to highlight the increased public and international awareness of disability issues, the widespread growth and development of organizations of disabled persons, the formulation, both at the national and the international level, of integrated policies and concepts aimed at improving the status of the disabled and the setting up of a mechanism for international cooperation to address the needs of the disabled throughout the world.

It is gratifying to note that the United Nations has been in the vanguard of this global movement towards the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. My delegation wishes to commend the work done by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs as the focal point in the United Nations system for disability issues. Of great importance were the establishment of an inter-agency mechanism and a non-governmental organization

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consultative mechanism, with a view to strengthening cooperation among United Nations agencies and between the United Nations and the family of non-governmental organizations.

My Government fully endorses the proclamation of 1993 to 2002 as the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons.

While much has been achieved over the Decade, it is obvious that the key objective of full and equal participation of the disabled in the life of a society is far from being realized. Today, 500 million men, women and children are unable fully to enjoy life because of physical or mental disability. Eighty-five per cent of them live in the developing countries, and thus are doubly disadvantaged by both the poverty and the disability. Furthermore, it is alarming that the number of disabled persons continues to increase as a result of currently escalating population growth rates, violence and war, poverty and deteriorating socio-economic conditions in many countries. Therefore, the international community is called upon to redouble its efforts to meet the challenges of disability issues in the 1990s. Now is the time to build upon the awareness raised throughout the Decade and turn this awareness into comprehensive disability programmes.

Mongolia attaches great importance to the activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, designed to facilitate the grass-roots level initiatives, and supports its continuation in the period beyond the Decade.

There is no doubt that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the World Programme of Action lies with the Member States. The Secretary-General's report (A/47/415) reveals that, despite certain progress

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in addressing a variety of disability issues, the implementation process in most of the countries has been uneven and difficult. We are fully cognizant of the fact that factors of an objective nature, such as the deterioration of economic and social conditions, the lack of financial resources, xenophobia and nationalistic tendencies, among others, have greatly hindered that process.

On the other hand, we must not avoid mentioning inadequate policies and activities on the part of Governments to deal with this "silent emergency" in a comprehensive and action-oriented manner.

The above, both positive and negative, can be attributed to my own country - Mongolia.

In a country which has embarked upon the road to a market economy, it is the vulnerable groups, including the disabled, who are the hardest hit. Conditions demand the urgent preparation of a comprehensive national disability programme and action-oriented activities of the Government to implement it. In this respect, we look forward to the early elaboration of a long-term strategy to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action to the year 2000 and beyond and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons.

In conclusion, my delegation expresses its full support for the sound recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report and the readiness of its Government to join in the world-wide endeavours towards a society for all.

Mrs. MBELLA NGOMBA (Cameroon): Our meeting here today to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons coincides with a new

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decade of change, a new decade where every nation must strive to attain full and equal participation and full integration of all its members into the mainstream of social and economic development, regardless of sex, age, race or disability.

After the International Year for Disabled Persons in 1981, the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Persons with Disability in 1982, with a long-term goal aimed at the rehabilitation of disabled persons, their full participation in society, and also the prevention of disability itself. At the end of the Decade, our objective should be to evaluate the achievements made at the national and international levels in implementation of the World Programme of Action, to assess the obstacles encountered and to examine prospects for surmounting these obstacles in the future.

Given the above criteria, our approach in reviewing national implementation of the World Programme of Action and the progress made will be confined to the experience that we know best, which relates to policies and programmes for the disabled in Cameroon.

After the adoption of the United Nations World Programme of Action in 1982, Parliament passed a law on the protection of the disabled in Cameroon in 1983. A decree in application of the law was later signed in 1990 by the President of the Republic His Excellency Paul Biya.

The practical implementation of the said legislation for disabled persons emphasizes special education for handicapped children and integration of these children in the regular primary and secondary school educational systems. Within the period of the Decade about 500 disabled children were able to

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complete their secondary school education and of those of them who went to university about 60 have graduated and are in the job market.

In the domain of institutional infrastructure for the disabled, the Government has encouraged associations of disabled persons in Cameroon to establish various cooperatives for the handicapped, much of the financing of which is heavily subsidized by the Government. In addition, the Government equally subsidized funding for the creation of 22 small-scale projects to benefit smaller groups of disabled persons and individual initiatives.

Furthermore, a unit for orthopaedic surgery, costing CFAF 350 million was established in our capital of Yaounde, along with a national rehabilitation centre called affectionately "Les Oeuvres du Cardinal Léger", which was recently renovated and extended with the assistance of the Canadian Government.

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One of the most successful undertakings of the Government on behalf of the disabled during the Decade was the creation of a rehabilitation institute for the blind in Buea, the south-western provincial capital, to which has been attached a large agricultural project and a fish-industry facility to train the blind in art, agriculture and fishery. In the last three years 100 blind adults have graduated from the institute.

In enhancing institutional infrastructure for disabled persons, the Government realized that it could not undertake its programmes single-handedly and that the private sector and the community at large had to become actively involved in the implementation of these programmes. As a result, a national strategy to mobilize greater awareness of the needs of the disabled in the private sector was launched. The result was the creation in the provinces of 16 privately-run, but also Government-subsidized institutions for the disabled. The most successful of these are the medical re-adaptation centre and the rehabilitation centre located in the south-western province of Cameroon, created with the technical cooperation and assistance of the Netherlands Government.

In spite of the national efforts made to integrate the disabled in our society, major obstacles have endured. Although the community in general has become more aware of and more accommodating towards the handicapped, most of the disabled people themselves have remained frustrated, particularly in a developing country like ours, by the hostile environment created by the economic recession and the various limitations it has imposed on the job market.

Also, many employers, particularly in the private sector, have often failed to acknowledge the potential of disabled workers. This, along with the

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physical and environmental barriers in the workplace, has compounded the problem of unemployment for disabled persons.

Furhermore, the recession has taken a great toll on the Government's capacity to invest effectively in social programmes for the disabled. An illustration of this fact is that in 1982 the Government's yearly expenditure for the blind alone was 180 million CFA francs, as compared to the mere 10 million CFA francs currently allocated to yearly expenditure on the blind. This issue of insufficient financing has greatly compromised and eroded the Government's potential to improve its institutional infrastructure for the disabled and its capacity to envisage more ambitious programmes.

Our national experience in integrating the disabled seems to have been replicated at the international level. However, in order not to dwell on pessimism, we wish to examine briefly the notable achievements made during the 10-year international crusade on behalf of disabled persons.

Several international bodies and organizations of the United Nations system have prepared guidelines and manuals on key disability issues to assist Governments in formulating their policies on disabled persons and in adopting programmes with innovative approaches to disability - although the Secretary-General's report has pointed to the fact that many countries did not have a comprehensive plan or programme within the framework of the World Programme of Action.

Among the United Nations agencies that have spearheaded international action on behalf of the disabled, we wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations office at Vienna, which in recent years has developed its capacity for disseminating information on disability and has instituted a

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unique interagency mechanism in collaboration with the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order to assess national and local rehabilitation services and to explore income-generating activities for disabled persons. It is our firm hope and conviction that the role of the Centre for Social Development should be further strengthened after the Decade, particularly its unit for the disabled, which is currently very much understaffed in proportion to the tasks to be accomplished.

Since the adoption of the World Programme of Action in 1982, there has been a drive in the international community for a new instrument to make the World Programme of Action more operational. As a result, the Economic and Social Council, at its first regular session in 1990, authorized the Commission for Social Development to establish a working group to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. In our capacity as current Chairman of the Commission for Social Development, Cameroon participated in the deliberations of the ad hoc working group that only last week, at its third and final session, adopted the draft document to be presented to the Commission at its thirty-third session. We hope that the standard rules, if and when adopted, will be accompanied by a monitoring mechanism leading to a more concrete review and evaluation of the United Nations programme on disability.

My delegation would also like to acknowledge the results of the expert-group meeting held at Vancouver in April 1992 and the ministerial meeting to mark the end of the Decade which recently took place in Montreal, Canada. It is our hope that the results of both meetings - which will be

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further examined by the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council - will contribute to the adoption by the General Assembly of a long-term strategy to guide international action on disability.

In spite of the efforts made at the international level in the areas of health and rehabilitation, recent statistics published by the United Nations Centre for Social Development at Vienna point to the fact that the number of disabled persons has increased over the course of the Decade, especially in war-stricken areas and regions affected by famine. Between 6 and 10 per cent of the world population - about 500 million people - have been identified as having one or more disabilities. Those figures include about 160 million women and 140 million children. About 300 million of the total figure live in developing countries and only 1 per cent of these have access to basic health and education and adequate sanitation services. The report further indicates that with the current escalating population-growth rates, poverty, accidents and armed conflicts, these figures will increase in the coming years.

The scenario I have described clearly indicates the strategy that must be followed. The international community must redouble its efforts in the period following the Decade to reach the long-term goals that were originally envisaged. It is in this light that my delegation fully endorses the proposal of the Secretary-General to continue the fund created for the Decade, under a new name - the United Nations Disability Fund - to finance programmes on disability.

Furthermore, drawing inspiration from the United Nations Institute for the Elderly in Malta, an institute for the disabled under United Nations auspices could be created with a clear mandate to foster international and regional cooperation on disability issues, placing emphasis on research, training and rehabilitation.

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At the national level, the creation of national coordinating committees or other national mechanisms to assist in monitoring the implementation of programmes for disabled persons should be encouraged. By the same token, particular effort must be made to ensure that disabled persons themselves are included in the conception and implementation of policies and programmes concerning them.

While much has been achieved during the Decade, it is obvious that the goal of full and equal participation is far from being realized. The current economic crisis and the resulting insufficient funding reflect the low priority that has been accorded disability issues. However, we firmly believe that equalization of opportunities for every member of society is an ideal towards which every nation must strive with the firm support of the international community. The United Nations must play a central role in such a renewed effort.

Ms. GILES (Australia): The Australian Government is committed to social justice for all Australians. We aim to enable Australians with a disability to participate fully in the economic, social, and political spheres, and so determine the direction of their own lives.

Australia has participated actively in the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. We in Australian have promoted the rights of people with a disability and have supported related international initiatives. In 1991 the Government contributed $100,000 to advance the work of the United Nations Expert Group developing international standards for achieving equal opportunities for people with a disability. We look forward to the report of the meetings of the working group, which will be considered by the Commission on Social Development early in 1993.

This year Australia co-sponsored a draft resolution at the forty-eighth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which proclaimed the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002. Australia was pleased to contribute $20,000 to the trust fund for the Decade. As the needs of the region become more apparent, we anticipate increased co-operation in information sharing and the provision of technical assistance. Australia also sent a delegation representing Government, people with a disability, and unions to the international congress and exposition - Independence '92 - in Vancouver in April 1992, and attended the ministerial meeting in Montreal last week.

Throughout the Decade the Australian Government has pursued a vision of a fairer Australia where people with a disability are regarded as having the same rights as all other citizens. It is timely that at the end of the Decade, after a series of legislative and social reforms, we have this year

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introduced into the Australian Parliament disability discrimination legislation in line with our international obligations under a number of United Nations instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the International Labour Organisation Convention concerning discrimination in employment and occupation. It is a far-reaching bill that will provide people with a disability with the legal means to address discrimination they may experience in their day-to-day activities.

The 1981 United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons heralded the beginning of this decade of change. For the first time, Australians began to listen seriously to the voice of people with a disability and, more importantly, to respond.

Australia recognized that people with a disability had been marginalized from mainstream society for too long. We believed that the only way to bring about widespread and enduring change was through cooperation at all levels of society. As a result, during the Decade, an unprecedented partnership has been forged between people with a disability, various levels of Government, employers, unions and the community at large. This partnership has led to more responsive and individualized accommodation and employment services, and has helped break down the barriers to full participation in mainstream activities within the community.

A detailed paper prepared by the Australian Government is attached as an annex to the text of my statement, and we hope policy information contained in the paper will assist in the dissemination of information between Governments. The recognition of the need to share our collective experiences,

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modifying them where necessary, to take account of different environments, was one of several constructive outcomes from the recent meeting in Montreal.

I am conscious time is short during these special plenary meetings, but would like briefly to outline some of the major policy initiatives we have found most effective in promoting the rights of and opportunities for people with disabilities. In the context of the Government's social justice policies, we have learned some basic lessons about the type of policy required to create the appropriate environment for individuals to realize their human potential. This approach gives strong emphasis to formal consultation with interested groups, including non-governmental organizations, unions, and business and service providers. It also provides appropriate means for long- and short-term support for individuals and their families.

In 1983 the Government established the Disability Advisory Council of Australia to enhance existing consultative mechanisms by advising the Minister responsible for disability services on the impact of policies which affect people with a disability and their families. Also in 1983 the Australian Government undertook widespread consultations with people with a disability across Australia about the types of services they wanted. The answers were clear: People with a disability did not want to be assigned a passive role outside the mainstream of life. They wanted to be acknowledged as people with the same wants and needs as everyone else. These consultations resulted in the introduction of landmark national legislation, the Disability Services Act, in 1987. The Disability Services Act includes a statement of principles and objectives which represent a clear policy commitment by the Australian Government to the rights of people with a disability, and key principles and practices that should apply to services which assist people with a disability.

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The Act aims to promote innovation in the provision of services, with a focus on achieving results which increase the power and options available to each person. It recognizes the need to provide assistance to ensure that, wherever possible, people with a disability can gain access to and benefit from the everyday services and facilities available to the general community. Within the framework of the Disability Services Act, the Disability Services Programme funds non-governmental organizations which provide employment, accommodation and community participation services for people with a disability.

We have realized that to make the principles and objectives of the Act a reality we must involve all members of society. The Australian Federal Government has therefore introduced initiatives to promote cooperation between Governments, cooperation between Government departments, cooperation in the workplace and cooperation in the community.

One such initiative was the disability reform package introduced in 1990, which brings together three Government departments whose responsibilities include income security, employment and training, and health and community services. This is a coordinated effort to change the nature of the income maintenance system from a dependence model to an active mechanism for support focusing on the needs of the individual. The package provides incentives to employers to employ people with a disability and to make people with a disability more competitive by providing opportunities for skills development while providing a secure basis of income support for those who need it.

Another initiative was the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement signed in 1991, which aims, through greater cooperation between Governments, to deliver services for people with a disability more effectively and

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efficiently. It seeks to establish agreed arrangements for the coordinated planning and implementation of Government responsibilities. It will also extend the benefits of the Commonwealth's Disability Services Act to those who use State Government services. Before the Agreement is implemented in a State, the State Government must enact legislation complementary to the Disability Services Act. To date four of Australia's eight States and Territories have done so, and several others are in the process of drafting new legislation.

As a result of these Australian Government initiatives, people with a disability are finally beginning to take their rightful place within the community. In particular, there has been a focus on promoting employment opportunities in recognition that this is one of the best means of breaking down economic and social barriers that have set people with a disability apart in the past. The Government provides a comprehensive range of employment placement and support services which assist people with a disability to gain and maintain mainstream jobs and provide alternatives to sheltered workshops.

(Ms. Giles, Australia)

The Australian Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service has radically changed its focus since the introduction of the Disability Services Act. It has dismantled its large institutions and now provides locally based community services focused on developing individualized return-to-work programmes.

Another major milestone was achieved in 1988 with the introduction of legislation administered by COMCARE Australia, to provide an integrated package of prevention programmes, compensation and return-to-work strategies for all Australian Government employees. The key to its successful operation is cooperation at the workplace level together with a framework of prevention and early intervention to effect a return to work as soon as possible.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons has seen the development of the Disability Discrimination Bill in Australia in 1992. That legislation will be a vital element in removing the attitudinal, physical, structural and institutional barriers that people with a disability currently face. Through such legislation the Government is providing a lead to the community and setting the direction for the coming decade, promoting attitudinal change through education and reconciliation. We firmly believe this legislation will not only significantly benefit people with a disability themselves, but that our nation as a whole will be enriched by the full participation of people with a disability in society on equal terms.

Notwithstanding those achievements, many challenges remain. There are still many people with a disability who do not receive the services from which they could benefit, or the justice they deserve. While the effects of the Government's social-justice initiatives are gradually filtering through to the wider Australian community, the process is at times slower than we would like.

(Ms. Giles, Australia)

As people with a disability gain access to the work force, employers and co-workers are becoming more aware of the valuable contribution that people with a disability can make economically and socially. The flow-on effect of this is attitudinal change that will help to break down the barriers that have set people with disabilities apart in the past.

Our vision is a fairer Australia where people with disabilities are regarded as equals, as people with the same rights as other citizens, with recourse to systems that redress the infringement of any of their rights, where people with a disability have equal access to programmes provided by Government, by the private sector and by community groups, where people with a disability can gain and hold meaningful employment that provides wages and career opportunities that reflect performance, where people with a disability have control over their own bodies, lives and future, where difference is accepted and where public instrumentalities, communities and individuals act to ensure that society accommodates such differences.

This is our challenge for the coming decade.

An account of policy, legislation and programmes such as I have just completed may fail adequately to convey their actual effects upon the daily lives and expectations of people with a disability. I should therefore like briefly to describe recent dramatic changes in the lives of some of my constituents, changes that are directly attributable to coordination between State and federal departments and that have been preceded and accompanied by comprehensive nation-wide consultation with people with disabilities and their organizations.

For instance, one young wheelchair-bound couple have in the very recent past made the transition from institutional life to their own suburban home,

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one designed with their participation to fulfil their special needs. While they were busy choosing furnishings for their new home they were also interviewing applicants for the positions of their personal attendants to be employed under our Attendant Care Scheme. For the first time in their lives they have been empowered to make such decisions.

In the second instance an institution for 40 profoundly intellectually and physically handicapped adults has gradually become redundant as the residents moved in groups of three or four to specially built or modified suburban houses. Under these new conditions, and with the help of 24-hour well-trained staff, aberrant behaviour gradually modifies, new skills are acquired and positive neighbourhood interaction rapidly develops. Their quality of life has been greatly enhanced and family acceptance has followed.

People with lower support needs have previously been limited to poorly paid jobs in sheltered workshops, but now, increasingly, have been given access to training and placement in open employment, and selective secondary schools are equipped with physiotherapy clinics for students whose disabilities would otherwise preclude their routine interaction with their peers.

Mr. AL-MUSHAQBEH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): It is a pleasure for me to be here today as we discuss the achievements of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and assess the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. Before coming to New York, I had attended the International Conference of Ministers responsible for Persons with Disabilities organized by the Government of Canada, at Montreal, last week. The results of that meeting demonstrated the international conviction of the need to intensify efforts and promote cooperation to guarantee the continuity

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of the processes that were initiated and set in motion during the Decade. The meetings highlighted future challenges and emphasized the fact that it is now high time that we embarked, together, on plans to face up to them.

It is obvious that the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons has not been fully implemented. Its importance lies in the fact that it created a motive and incentive for the majority of countries to initiate serious action aimed at achieving its objectives, namely, the objective of ensuring full participation by disabled persons in social life and development, as well as the objective of equality. Those objectives have provided the disabled with a strong incentive to develop their abilities and to assert themselves. Moreover, the objectives of the Programme as a whole have provided those who render services to the disabled with a motive to improve those services so that disabled may be helped to surmount their disabilities to the greatest extent possible.

The Programme also encouraged us to free ourselves from the domination of remedial services and to devote ourselves to measures of prevention and development wherever approporiate.

Among the principal achievements of the Decade in my country, Jordan, with regard to the disabled, was an increased awareness of the importance of deploying concerted efforts by various sectors to improve the conditions of the disabled, side by side with an awareness on the part of the disabled themselves that they have to express their needs more effectively and confidence in their ability to make their own decisions on matters that affect their lives.

The most telling example of this was the participation by a number of disabled persons in drawing up the provisional Jordanian law on care for the

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disabled, which entered into force at the beginning of 1990. That law established statutory rights to education, training and rehabilitation for the disabled with a view to integrating them into productive society. It also guaranteed for them diagnostic services and free medical services.

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The law also introduced tax and customs exemptions on educational materials and the machines and different means of transportation used by the centres which render diagnostic and other health services to the disabled and to the disabled themselves.

The law also established the national council on care for the disabled. Many governmental and civil organizations are represented in that council. But the most important stipulation of the law was the statutory representation of the disabled and their parents in that council. The council is mandated to formulate policies and draw up plans for prevention and rehabilitation programmes that operate under the supervision of the Government and of non-governmental sectors.

Moreover, the new draft labour law in Jordan stipulates that every institution with more than 50 employees must recruit no less than 2 per cent of its workforce from the ranks of the disabled. This is not the first move by Jordan to guarantee an income to the disabled. Programmes aimed at increased incomes were first introduced for the benefit of those disabled who sustained their disabilities as a result of wars from the early 1950s. Those programmes have been developed now to embrace other disabled persons.

Although there is a conviction that it is necessary to integrate disabled students into ordinary schools, the achievement of that objective will take some time. Therefore, it is necessary, for the time being, to build more schools and centres for the disabled.

Jordan has governmental and civil schools rendering services for the elementary grades and the number of those schools has increased to 68 since the beginning of the decade. The number of disabled students in those schools has doubled, vocational training programmes have been expanded and new crafts have been included in the curricula. Some of those are targeted at disabled

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girls. We have now 9,000 disabled students from the grand total of 140,000 disabled persons. However, if we estimate that 5 per cent of the population is disabled, it becomes clear that the schools and the centres that are now in existence serve no more than 5 per cent of those who need them. This demonstrates Jordan's need for international and bilateral aid in this respect.

Jordan's future strategy in the area of care for the disabled is to increase programmes of general awareness, to intensify measures aimed at preventing disability, to expand vocational training, to promote services of special education, to expand programmes for increasing income and to set up a comprehensive centre for diagnosis, using mobile units for rehabilitation in remote areas as well as to develop training programmes for special education teachers.

The International Conference of Ministers responsible for Persons with Disabilities held in Canada last week has given us high hopes of cooperation and coordination between States to better the conditions of the disabled all over the world.

My country, which takes pleasure in supporting the document adopted by the Conference appeals to all Member States to do the same and to implement its recommendations. We wish to remind the Assembly that our commitment as States towards human rights will not be complete if we do not work seriously for the application of human rights and principles for the disabled.

I wish here to recall a statement made by His Majesty, King Hussein, at the beginning of the International Year for the Disabled when he said that disability lies in the society that does not provide the disabled with

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opportunities of participation and contribution and allows the putting up of barriers that limit their abilities and performance. Let us then work together in order to remove those barriers.

Mr. MONGBE (Benin) (interpretation from French): The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Benin would have liked to participate in the special meeting herself, but for reasons beyond her control she is unable to be here today. She has asked me to convey her sincere wishes for the success of our work.

It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly in the context of the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

Ten years ago the international community marked the end of the International Year of Disabled Persons. On that occasion, in December 1982, the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the main result of the International Year, and proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

We are here today to mark the end of the Decade, to assess the road travelled and to plan a programme for the future.

In this regard, Benin welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the World Programe of Action for the Decade. The report enables us to review the goals that have been achieved in the context of the Organization's follow-up activities. As the Secretary-General indicates in his report, the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons has had some success, some insufficiencies and some failures.

Despite a certain amount of progress in some developing countries in the areas of health and rehabilitation, the number of disabled persons, particularly in regions afflicted by war or famine, has increased during the Decade.

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

With the great increase in population growth rates at the present time, poverty, accidents and armed conflicts will rise further in the future.

In another area there has been an increased awareness and a better understanding of questions relating to the disabled since the International Year and the beginning of the Decade.

The objectives are still very far from having been reached. However, the main lines of the World Programme of Action - namely, prevention, re-education, equal opportunities and full participation - have given us a valuable basis for progress where they have been applied.

The Decade has served as a framework for carrying out many important projects for the benefit of disabled persons.

In Benin, in the context of the implementation of the World Programme of Action, plans have been implemented to benefit disabled persons.

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I should like to mention some of these actions. In 1981 a national seminar was organized to promote awareness of the problems of disabled persons. This seminar brought together national partners including disabled persons. In 1983 a centre for the blind and partially sighted was established. In 1988 a national social affairs day was devoted to the situation of disabled persons and a special school for deaf children was opened.

In 1989 a special school for mentally handicapped persons was opened by the Beninese Association for the Mentally Handicapped, and a community-based rehabilitation programme was begun. One of its main goals is to promote a network of integrated inter-sectoral programmes to ensure for disabled persons in the short, medium and long term, a full range of basic health, education, training, employment and other services. In 1991 a seminar on the past, present and future of community-based rehabilitation brought together national and foreign non-governmental organizations and specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations, as well as national partners.

Benin now has three centres for the fitting of artificial limbs, as well as the Beninese School for the Deaf, established by the national education Ministry. Before the end of 1992 the elaboration of a national policy for disabled persons will be completed.

Despite the many activities that are being carried out, the main goals in this area are still being achieved slowly because our financial resources are very limited. Therefore, it is desirable that in multilateral assistance and technical cooperation programmes we give high priority and devote more resources to issues related to disability.

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

Benin was privileged to be among the 75 countries whose Ministers and representatives responsible for disabled persons were invited by the Government of Canada to an international Conference - the first of its type - held last week in Montreal, where, as the Canadian Minister, Mr. Robert René de Cotret, said this morning, an opportunity was offered to "look to the future" (A/47/PV.33, p. 37) and to seek to put an end to

> "discriminatory attitudes that deny equality, erode independence, limit opportunity and force isolation". (A/47/PV.33, p. 38)

In this perspective, one of the great tasks that the international community must tackle in the coming years is to perpetuate the awareness witnessed during the Decade, by taking concrete steps to establish a society in which everyone has a place and of which disabled persons are an integral part.

The meeting rose at 7.45 p.m.